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Zebaria Stoddard

SOLEMN REVIEW

OF THE

CUSTOM OF WAR;

SHOWING

THAT WAR IS THE EFFECT OF POPULAR DELUSION,

AND

PROPOSING A REMEDY.

BY PHILO PACIFICUS.

"A glorious success, quietly obtained, is more profitable than the dangers of a battle; for we ought to esteem those, who do what is agreeable to temperance and prudence, no less glorious than those, who have gained great reputation by their actions in war." *Vespasian.*

FIFTH EDITION.

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## SOLEMN REVIEW.

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### SECTION I.

*“ Shall the sword devour forever ? ”*

We regard with horror the custom of the ancient heathens in offering their children in sacrifice to idols. We are shocked with the customs of the Hindoos, in prostrating themselves before the car of an idol, to be crushed to death ; in burning women alive on the funeral piles of their husbands ; in offering a monthly sacrifice, by casting living children into the Ganges to be drowned. We read with astonishment of the sacrifices made in the papal crusades, and in the Mahometan and Hindoo pilgrimages. We wonder at the blindness of christian nations, who have esteemed it right and honorable to buy and sell Africans as property, and reduce them to bondage for life. But that which is fashionable and popular in a country is esteemed right and honorable, whatever may be its nature in the views of men better informed.

But while we look back with a mixture of wonder, indignation and pity, on many of the customs of former ages, are we careful to inquire, whether some customs, which we deem honorable, are not the effect of popular delusion ? and whether they will not be so regarded by future generations ? Is it not a fact, that one of the most horrid customs of savage men, is now popular in every nation in Christendom ? What custom of the most barbarous nations is more repugnant to the feelings of piety, humanity and justice, than that of deciding controversies between nations by the edge of the sword, by powder and ball, or the point of the bayonet ? What other savage custom has occasioned half the desolation and misery

to the human race? And what but the grossest infatuation, could render such a custom popular among rational beings?

When we consider how great a part of mankind have perished by the hands of each other, and how large a portion of human calamity has resulted from war; it surely cannot appear indifferent, whether this custom is or is not the effect of delusion. Certainly there is no custom which deserves a more thorough examination, than that which has occasioned more slaughter and misery, than all the other abominable customs of the heathen world.

War has been so long fashionable among all nations, that its enormity is but little regarded; or when thought of at all, it is usually considered as an evil necessary and unavoidable. Perhaps it is really so in the present state of society, and the present views of mankind. But the question to be considered is this; cannot the state of society and the views of civilized men be so changed as to abolish a barbarous custom, and render wars unnecessary and avoidable?

If this question may be answered in the affirmative, then we may hope "the sword will not devour forever."

Some may be ready to exclaim, none but God can produce such an effect as the abolition of war; and we must wait for the millennial day. We admit that God only can produce the necessary change in the state of society, and the views of men; but God works by human agency and human means. God only could have overthrown the empire of Napoleon; but this he did by granting success to the efforts of the allied powers. He only could have produced such a change in the views of the British nation, as to abolish the slave trade; yet the event was brought about by a long course of persevering and honorable exertions of benevolent men.

When the thing was first proposed, it probably appeared to the majority of the people, as an unavailing and chimerical project. But God raised up powerful advocates, gave them the spirit of perseverance, and finally crowned their efforts with glorious success. Now, it is probable, thousands

of people are wondering how such an abominable traffic ever had existence in a nation which had the least pretensions to christianity or civilization. In a similar manner God can put an end to war, and fill the world with astonishment, that rational beings ever thought of such a mode of settling controversies.

As to waiting for the millennium to put an end to war, without any exertions on our own part ; this is like the sinner's waiting God's time for conversion, while he pursues his course of vice and impiety. If ever there shall be a millennium, in which the sword will cease to devour, it will probably be effected by the blessing of God on the benevolent exertions of enlightened men. Perhaps no one thing is now a greater obstacle in the way of the wished for state of the church, than the *spirit* and *custom* of war, which is maintained by christians themselves. Is it not then time, that efforts should be made to enlighten the minds of christians on a subject of such infinite importance to the happiness of the human race ?

It is not the present object to prove, that a nation may not defend their lives, their liberties and their property against an invading foe ; but to inquire whether it is not possible to effect such a change in the views of men, that there shall be no occasion for *defensive* war. That such a state of things is desirable, no enlightened christian can deny. That it can be produced without expensive and persevering efforts is not imagined. But are not such efforts to exclude the miseries of war from the world, as laudable, as those which have for their object the support of such a malignant and desolating custom ?

The whole amount of property in the United States is probably of far less value, than what has been expended and destroyed within two centuries by wars in Christendom. Suppose, then, that one fifth of this amount had been judiciously laid out by peace associations in the different states and nations, in cultivating the spirit and art of peace, and in exciting a just abhorrence of war ; would not the other four fifths have been in a great measure saved, besides many millions of

lives, and an immense portion of misery ? Had the whole value of what has been expended in wars, been appropriated to the purpose of peace, how laudable would have been the appropriation, and how blessed the consequences !

## SECTION II.

*“ Shall the sword devour forever ?”*

That it is possible to produce such a state of society, as to exclude national wars, may appear probable from the following facts.

1. It is impossible for the rulers of any one nation to do much in carrying on a war with another, without the aid of subjects, or the common people.

2. A war between two nations is generally produced by the influence of a small number of ambitious and unprincipled individuals ; while the greater part of the nation has no hand in the business until war is proclaimed.

3. A vast majority of every civilized nation have an aversion to war ; such an aversion that it requires much effort and management, to work up their passions so far, that they are willing personally to engage in such hazardous and bloody conflicts. The more any people are civilized and christianized, the greater is their aversion to war ; and the more powerful exertions are necessary to excite what is called the *war spirit*. Were it not for the influence of a few ambitious or revengeful men, an offensive war could not be undertaken with any prospect of success, except when the mass of the people are either uncivilized, or slaves. If then, as great exertions should be made to excite a just abhorrence of war, as have often been made to excite a war spirit, we may be very certain that rulers would find little encouragement to engage in any war, which is not strictly defensive. And as soon as offensive wars shall cease, defensive wars will of course be unknown.

4. It is an affront to common sense, to pretend that military officers and soldiers have no right to inquire whether a war be just or unjust ; and that all they have to do is to obey the

orders of government. Such a doctrine is fit to be taught only to slaves without souls. If a man is called to fight, he should be faithfully informed, and fully satisfied, that he is not to act the part of a murderer, that the blood of men may not be required at his hands. Every soldier ought to be impressed with the idea, that offensive war is murderous, and that no government on earth has any right to compel him to shed blood in a wanton and aggressive war. Yet in the present state of general delusion, the soldiers and most of the citizens are treated as having no more right to judge of the justice or the injustice of a war, than the horses employed in military service. On one side a war is certainly unjust and murderous. Yet on both sides it is considered as the duty of soldiers to submit to the orders of government, and fight, whether it be murder or not murder! With the same propriety it might be considered as the duty of a citizen, to obey an order of government for murdering an individual of his own nation.

5. National wars often originate from such petty offences, as would not justify the taking of a single life, and from false principles of honor, which every christian should abhor. What can be more perfect delusion, than to suppose the *honor* of a nation requires a declaration of war, for such offences as would not justify one individual in taking the life of another? Or what can be more absurd than to suppose the honor of a nation requires going to war, while there is not even the prospect of advantage? Is such petulance, as would disgrace a common citizen, or such a revengeful spirit, as would disgrace a savage, becoming the dignity of a national government, or the ruler of a christian people?

To sacrifice human beings to false notions of national honor, or to the ambition or avarice of rulers, is no better than to offer them to Moloch, or any other heathen deity. As soon as the eyes of people can be opened to see that war is the effect of delusion, it will then become as unpopular as any other heathenish mode of offering human sacrifices.

It is enough to fill the mind of any reflecting man with hor-

ror, to think of the millions of his fellow men, who have been sacrificed to the ambition, the avarice, the petulance, or the profligacy of ungodly rulers. How shocking the thought, of armies meeting under the influence of enmity, artificially excited, to plunge their bayonets into the breasts of each other ; and thus to offer human sacrifices by thousands, to some idolized phantom of ambitious or revengeful men ! In every war that has taken place, the soldiers, on one side or the other, have been either the slaves or the dupes of deluded or unprincipled rulers. The soldiers on each side often meet without ever having experienced the least injury from each other ; with no enmity but what has been artificially excited, and without having the least ground to be offended with each other, any more than they had in a time of perfect peace. Yet those who never had any provocation from one another, nor any hand in proclaiming the war, are by art inspired with enmity, and made to thirst for each other's blood, and to perish by each other's hands. A more barbarous mode of offering human sacrifices was never practised by the most savage nations ; nor one, it is believed, more abhorrent in the eyes of Heaven.

Public wars and private duels seem to be practised on similar principles. Gentlemen may fight and kill for petty offences ; but if common people do the same, they are hanged as murderers. Gentlemen of the sword cannot wait the slow operation of law, for the redress of supposed wrongs, but must show themselves men of spirit, that is, ready to kill for an offensive word. What is deemed honorable virtue in them, is shameful vice in other people. That benevolent, forbearing spirit, which is the glory of good people, is thought beneath the dignity of a gentleman of honor. First to give a challenge, and thus notify a man of a wish to kill him, is supposed to exclude the sin of murder. So in regard to war makers, that magnanimity and forbearance, which would adorn the character of a private christian, is despised by the ambitious ruler, in relation to himself. And that petulance, rashness, and disregard to the lives of others, which would render a private

citizen the object of just and general abhorrence, are regarded by many, as honorable traits in the character of one, who is exalted to rule over men. If in the exercise of this haughty, unfeeling and vindictive temper he declares war, this declaration, he fancies, will secure him from the guilt of murder. Thus thousands after thousands are sacrificed on the altar of his ungodly ambition; and every means, which ingenuity can invent, is employed to delude the unfortunate victims, and make them believe, that with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

There is, however, one circumstance usually attending public wars, which renders them more detestable than private duels. The duellist usually has the generosity to do his own fighting: but war makers usually have the meanness to avoid the dangers which they create, and to call on other people to fight their battles.

Duelling is indeed a horrible custom; but war is as much more horrible, as it is more desolating and ruinous. As to the principles on which war is practised, it has no advantage of duelling. It is in fact *national duelling*, attended generally with this dishonorable circumstance, that those who give and accept the challenge, call together a multitude of seconds, and then have not the magnanimity, first to risk their own lives, but they involve their seconds in a bloody contest, while they themselves stand remote from danger, as spectators, or at most as directors of the awful combat. Or perhaps more commonly, after issuing their bloody mandate, they indulge in pleasure, regardless of the suffering of others. So “the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.”

### SECTION III.

“ *Shall the sword devour forever?*”

In favor of war several pleas will probably be made.

First. Some will plead that the Israelites were permitted, and even commanded to make war on the inhabitants of Ca-

naan. To this it may be answered, that the Giver and Arbiter of life had a right, if he pleased, to make use of the savage customs of the age, for punishing guilty nations. If any government of the present day should receive a commission to make war, as the Israelites did, let the order be obeyed. But until they have such a commission, let it not be imagined that they can innocently make war.

As a farther answer to this plea, we have to observe, that God has given encouragement, that under the reign of the Messiah, there shall be such a time of peace, "that nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Micah iv. 3. If this prediction shall ever be fulfilled, the present delusion in favor of war must be done away. How then are we to expect the way will be prepared for the accomplishment of the prediction? Probably this is not to be done by miraculous agency, but by the blessing of God on the benevolent exertions of individuals to open the eyes of their fellow mortals, in respect to the evils and delusions of war, and the blessings of peace. Those who shall be the instruments of producing so important a change in the views of men, will be in an eminent sense "peace makers," and will be entitled to the appellation and privileges of "the sons of God." How much more glorious the achievement, to conquer the prejudices and delusions of men on this subject by kindness and reason, than to conquer the world by the edge of the sword!

A second plea in favor of the custom of war may be this—that war is an advantage to a nation, as it usually takes off many vicious and dangerous characters. But does not war make two such characters for every one it removes? Is it not in fact the greatest school of depravity, and the greatest source of mischievous and dangerous characters that ever existed among men? Does not a state of war lower down the standard of morality in a nation, so that a vast portion of common vice is scarcely observed as evil? Let any one who was

old enough to observe the state of morals prior to our revolution, ask him: If, What was the effect of that war on the morals of New England?

Besides, is it not awful to think of sending vicious men beyond the means of reformation, and the hope of repentance! When they are sent into the army, what is this but consigning them to a state where they will rapidly fill up the measure of their iniquity, and become "fitted to destruction!"

Thirdly. It will be pleaded, that no substitute for war can be devised, which will insure to a nation a redress of wrongs. In reply we may ask, Is it common for a nation to obtain a *redress* of wrongs by war? As to *redress*, do not the wars of nations resemble boxing at a tavern, when both the combatants receive a terrible bruising, then drink a mug of flip together and make peace; each, however, bearing for a long time the marks of his folly and madness? A redress of wrongs by war is so uncommon, that unless revenge is redress, and multiplied injuries satisfaction, we should suppose that none but madmen would run the hazard.

But if the eyes of people could be opened in regard to the evils and delusions of war, would it not be easy to form a confederacy of nations, and organize a high court of equity, to decide national controversies? Why might not such a court be composed of some of the most eminent characters from each nation; and a compliance with the decision of the court be made a point of national honor, to prevent the effusion of blood, and to preserve the blessings of peace? Can any considerate person say, that the probability of obtaining right in such a court, would be *less* than by an appeal to arms? When an individual appeals to a court of justice for the redress of wrongs, it is not always the case that he obtains his right. Still such an appeal is more honorable, more safe, and more certain, as well as more benevolent, than for the individual to attempt to obtain a redress by his pistol or his sword. And are not the reasons for avoiding an appeal to the sword, for the redress of wrongs, always great in proportion to the calamities, which such an appeal must naturally involve? If this be a fact, then

there is infinitely greater reason, why two nations should avoid an appeal to arms, than usually exists against a bloody combat between two contending individuals.

In the fourth place it may be urged, that a spirit of forbearance on the part of a national government, would operate as an invitation to repeated insult and aggression.

But is this plea founded on facts and experience? Does it accord with what is well known of human nature? Who are the persons in society that most frequently receive insult and abuse? Are they the meek, the benevolent, and the forbearing? Do these more commonly have reason to complain, than persons of quick resentment, who are ready to fight on the least provocation?

There are two sects of professed christians in this country, which, as sects, are peculiar in their opinions respecting the lawfulness of war, and the right of repelling injury by violence. These are the Quakers and the Shakers. They are remarkably pacific. Now we ask, does it appear from experience that their forbearing spirit brings on them a greater portion of injury and insult than what is experienced by people of other sects? Is not the reverse of this true in fact? There may indeed be some instances of such gross depravity, as a person's taking advantage of their pacific character, to do them injury, with the hope of impunity. But in general, it is believed, their pacific principles and spirit command the esteem even of the vicious, and operate as a shield from insult and abuse.

The question may be brought home to every society. How seldom do children of a mild, forbearing temper experience insult or injury, compared with the waspish, who will sting if touched? The same inquiry may be made in respect to persons of these opposite descriptions of every age, and in every situation of life; and the result will be favorable to the point in question.

Should any deny the applicability of these examples to national rulers, we have the pleasure of being able to produce one example, which is undeniably applicable.

When William Penn took the government of Pennsylvania, he distinctly avowed to the Indians his forbearing and pacific principles, and his benevolent wishes for uninterrupted peace with them. On these principles the government was administered, while it remained in the hands of the Quakers. What then was the effect? Did this pacific character in government invite aggression and insult? Let the answer be given in the language of the Edinburgh Review of the Life of William Penn. Speaking of the treaty made by Penn with the Indians, the Reviewer says:—

“ Such indeed was the spirit in which the negotiation was entered into, and the corresponding settlement conducted, that for the space of more than *seventy years*—and so long indeed as the quakers retained the chief power in the government, the peace and amity, which had been thus solemnly promised and concluded, never was violated; and a large though solitary example afforded, of the facility with which they, who are really sincere and friendly in their views, may live in harmony with those who are supposed to be peculiarly fierce and faithless.”

Shall then this “solitary” but successful “example” never be imitated? “Shall the sword devour forever?”

#### SECTION IV.

Some of the evils of war have already been mentioned, but the field is almost boundless. The demoralizing and depraving effects of war cannot be too seriously considered. We have heard much of the corrupting tendency of some of the rites and customs of the heathen; but what custom of the heathen nations had a greater effect in depraving the human character than the custom of war? What is that feeling usually called a *war spirit*, but a deleterious compound of enthusiastic ardor, ambition, malignity and revenge? a compound, which as really endangers the *soul* of the possessor, as the *life* of his enemy! Who, but a person deranged or deluded, would think it safe to rush into the presence of his Judge with his heart boiling with enmity, and his brother’s blood drip-

ping from his hands ! Yet in time of war, how much pains is taken to excite and maintain this bloodthirsty disposition, as essential to success !

The profession of a soldier exposes him to sudden and untimely death, and at the same time hardens his heart, renders him regardless of his final account. When a person goes into the army, it is expected of him, that he will rise above the fear of death. In doing this he too commonly rises above the fear of God, and all serious concern for his soul. It is not denied that some men sustain virtuous characters amidst the contaminating vapors of a camp ; and some may be reformed by a sense of the dangers to which they are exposed ; but these are uncommon occurrences.

The depravity, occasioned by war, is not confined to the army. Every species of vice gains ground in a nation during a war. And when a war is brought to a close, seldom, perhaps, does a community return to its former standard of morals. In time of peace, vice and irreligion generally retain the ground they acquired by war. As every war augments the amount of national depravity, so it proportionably increases the dangers and miseries of society.\*

\* It has been suggested by a friend that there is an exception to this account—that Great Britain has been engaged in war the greater part of the time for a century, and that probably the moral and religious character of the nation has been improved during that period.

Admitting the correctness of this statement, it amounts to no more than one exception from a general rule ; and this one may be accounted for, on the ground of singular facts.

1. The Island of Great Britain has *not* been the *seat of war* for a long course of years. The wars of that nation have been carried on abroad ; and their army and navy have had little intercourse with the population at home. This mode of warfare has tended to remove from their own country the corrupting influence of military camps. Had their Island been the seat of war for eighty years out of a hundred, the effects would, in a great measure, have been reversed. But

2. There have been within 20 years, singular efforts in that nation, which have had a tendency to counteract the moral influence of war. Their *Missionary Societies*, their *Bible Societies*, and a vast number of religious, moral, and charitable institutions, must have had a powerful and favorable influence on the character of the nation. By *these*, and *not by wars*, the moral state of the nation has been improved

Among the evil effects of war, a wanton undervaluing of human life ought to be mentioned. This effect may appear in various forms. When a war is declared for the redress of some wrong, in regard to property, if nothing but property be taken into consideration, the result is not commonly better, than spending five hundred dollars in a law suit, to recover a debt of ten. But when we come to estimate human lives against dollars and cents, how are we confounded! "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Yet, by the custom of war men are so deluded, that a ruler may give fifty or a hundred thousand lives, when only a trifling amount of property is in question, and when the probabilities are as ten to one against him, that even that small amount will not be secured by the contest. It must however again be remarked, that war makers do not usually give their *own lives*, but the *lives of others*. How often has a war been declared with the prospect that not less than 50,000 lives must be sacrificed; and while the chief agent in making the war would not have given his own life, to secure to his nation every thing that he claimed from the other? And are rulers to be upheld in thus gambling away the lives of others, while they are careful to secure their own? If people in general could obtain just views of this species of gambling, rulers would not make offensive wars with impunity. How little do they consider the misery and wretchedness which they bring on those, for whom they should exercise the kindness and care of a father! Does it not appear that they regard the lives of soldiers as mere property, which they may sacrifice, or barter away at pleasure? War is in truth the most dreadful species of gambling. Rulers are the gamblers. The lives and property of their subjects are the things they put to hazard in the game; and he that is most successful in doing mischief, is considered as the best gamester.

After all, we are perhaps not very adequate judges of the present depravity in that nation. Their army and navy may still be considered in estimating the amount of national depravity, as well as of population. Let these return home, be disbanded, and mixed with the general mass of citizens; what then would be the moral state of society in Great Britain?

If by the custom of war, rulers learn to undervalue the lives of their own subjects, how much more do they undervalue the lives of their enemies ! As they learn to hear of the loss of five hundred, or a thousand of their own men, with perhaps less feeling than they would hear of the death of a favorite horse or dog ; so they learn to hear of the death of thousands after thousands on the side of the enemy, with joy and exultation. If their own men have succeeded in taking an unimportant fortress, or a frigate, with the loss of fifty lives on their own side, and fifty one on the other, this is a matter of joy and triumph. This time they have got the game. But alas ! at what expense to others ! This expense, however, does not interrupt the joy of war makers. They leave it to the wounded and the friends of the dead to *feel* and to *mourn*.

This dreadful depravity of feeling is not confined to rulers in time of war. The army becomes abandoned to such depravity. They learn to undervalue not only the lives of their enemies, but even their own ; and will often wantonly rush into the arms of death, for the sake of military glory. And more or less of the same want of feeling, and the same undervaluing of human life, extends through the nation, in proportion to the frequency of battles, and the duration of war.

If any thing be done by the army of one nation, which is deemed by the other as contrary to the modern usages in war ; how soon do we hear the exclamations, of *Goths and Vandals* ! Yet what are christians at war, better than those barbarous tribes ? and what is the war spirit in them, better than the spirit of Goths and Vandals ? When the war spirit is excited, it is not always to be circumscribed in its operations, by the refinements of civilization. It is at best a bloody and desolating spirit.

What is our boast of civilization, or christianization, while we tolerate, as popular and justifiable, the most horrid custom which ever resulted from human wickedness ! Should a period arrive when the nations “ shall learn war no more ;” what will posterity think of our claims, as christians and civilized men ? The custom of sacrificing men by war, may appear to

them as the *blackest* of all heathen superstitions. Its present popularity may appear as wonderful to ages to come, as the past popularity of any ancient custom now does to us. What! they may exclaim, could those be *Christians*, who would sacrifice men by thousands to a point of *honor*, falsely so called; or to obtain a redress of a trifling wrong in regard to property! If such were the customs of christians, what were they better than the heathens of their own time?

Perhaps some apologist may rise up in that day, and plead, that it appears from the history of our times, that it was supposed necessary to the safety of a nation, that its government should be quick to assume a warlike tone and attitude, upon every infringement of their rights; that magnanimous forbearance was considered as pusillanimity, and that christian meekness was thought intolerable in the character of a ruler.

To this others may reply—Could these professed christians imagine, that their safety depended on displaying a spirit the reverse of their Master's? Could they suppose such a temper best calculated to insure the protection of him, who held their destiny in his hands? Did they not know that wars were of a demoralizing tendency, and that the greatest danger of a nation resulted from its corruption and depravity? Did they not also know, that a haughty spirit of resentment in one government, was very sure to provoke a similar spirit in another? that one war usually paved the way for a repetition of similar calamities, by depraving each of the contending parties, and by fixing enmities and jealousies, which would be ready to break forth on the most frivolous occasions?

## SECTION V.

That we may obtain a still clearer view of the delusions of war, let us look back to the origin of society. Suppose a family, like that of Noah, to commence the settlement of a country. They multiply into a number of distinct families. Then in the course of years they become so numerous as to form distinct governments. In any stage of their progress, unfortunate dis-

putes might arise by the imprudence, the avarice, or the ambition of individuals.

Now at what period would it be proper to introduce the custom of deciding controversies by the edge of the sword, or an appeal to arms ? Might this be done when the families had increased to ten ? Who would not be shocked at the madness of introducing such a custom under such circumstances ? Might it then with more propriety be done when the families had multiplied to fifty, or to a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand ? The greater the number, the greater the danger, the greater the carnage and calamity. Besides, what reason can be given, why this mode of deciding controversies would not be as proper when there were but ten families, as when there were ten thousand. And why might not two individuals thus decide disputes, as well as two nations ?

Perhaps all will admit that the custom could not be honorably introduced, until they separated, and formed two or more distinct governments. But would this change of circumstances dissolve their ties as brethren, and their obligations as accountable beings ? Would the organization of distinct governments confer a right on rulers to appeal to arms for the settlement of controversies ? Is it not manifest, that no period can be assigned, at which the introduction of such a custom would not be absolute murder ? And shall a custom, which must have been murderous at its commencement, be now upheld as necessary and honorable !

But, says the objector, in determining the question, whether war is now the effect of delusion, we must consider what mankind *are*, and not what they would have been, had wars never been introduced.

To this we reply : We should consider both ; and by what *ought* to have been the state of society, we may discover the present delusion, and the need of light and reformation. If it would have been to the honor of the human race, had the custom of war never commenced, it must be desirable to dispel the present darkness, and exterminate the desolating scourge. The same objection might have been made to the proposition

in the British Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade : the same may now be made against any attempt to abolish the custom of human sacrifices among the Hindoos ; yea, the same may be urged against every attempt to root out pernicious and immoral customs of long standing.

Let it then be seriously considered, how abominably murderous the custom must have been in its origin ; how precarious the mode of obtaining redress ; how often the aggressor is successful ; how small a part even of the successful nation is ever benefitted by the war ; how a nation is almost uniformly impoverished by the contest ; how many individuals are absolutely ruined as to property, or morals, or both ; and what a multitude of fellow creatures are hurried into eternity in an untimely manner, and an unprepared state. And who can hesitate a moment to denounce war as the effect of popular delusion ?

Let every christian seriously consider the malignant nature of that spirit, which war makers evidently wish to excite, and compare it with the temper of Jesus, and where is the christian who would not shudder at the thought of dying in the exercise of the common war spirit, and also at the thought of being the instrument of exciting such a spirit in his fellow men ? Any custom which cannot be supported but by exciting in men the very temper of the devil, ought surely to be banished from the christian world.

The impression, that aggressive war is murderous, is general among christians, if not universal. The justness of this impression seems to be admitted by almost every government in going to war. For this reason each of two governments endeavours to fix on the other the charge of aggression, and to assume to itself the ground of defending some right, or avenging some wrong. Thus each excuses itself, and charges the other with all the blood and misery, which result from the contest.

These facts, however, are so far from affording a plea in favor of the custom of war, that they afford a weighty reason for its abolition. If in the view of conscience, the aggressor

is a murderer, and answerable for the blood shed in war ; if one or the other must be viewed by God as the aggressor ; and if such is the delusion attending war, that each party is liable to consider the other as the aggressor ; surely there must be serious danger of a nation's being involved in the guilt of murder, while they imagine they have a cause which may be justified.

So prone are men to be blinded by their passions, their prejudices and their interests, that in most private quarrels, each of two individuals persuades himself that he is in the right, and his neighbour in the wrong. Hence the propriety of arbitrations, references, and appeals to courts of justice, that persons more disinterested may judge, and prevent that injustice and desolation, which would result from deciding private disputes by single combat or acts of violence.

But rulers of nations are as liable to be misled by their passions and interests as other men ; and when misled, they are very sure to mislead those of their subjects, who have confidence in their wisdom and integrity. Hence it is highly important that the custom of war should be abolished, and some other mode adopted, to settle disputes between nations. In private disputes there may be cause of complaint on each side, while neither has reason to shed the blood of the other ; much less to shed the blood of innocent family connexions, neighbours and friends. So of two nations, each may have cause of complaint, while neither can be justified in making war ; and much less in shedding the blood of innocent people, who have had no hand in giving the offence.

It is an awful feature in the character of war, and a strong reason why it should not be countenanced, that it involves the innocent with the guilty in the calamities it inflicts ; and often falls with the greatest vengeance on those, who have had no concern in the management of national affairs. It surely is not a crime to be born in a country, which is afterwards invaded ; yet in how many instances do war makers punish or destroy, for no other crime than being a native or resident of an invaded territory. A mode of revenge or redress, which makes no distinction between the innocent and the guilty,

ought to be discomfited by every friend to justice and humanity.

Besides, as the rulers of a nation are as liable as other people, to be governed by passion and prejudice, there is as little prospect of justice in permitting war for the decision of national disputes, as there would be in permitting an incensed individual to be, in his own cause, complainant, witness, judge, jury and executioner. In what point of view, then, is war not to be regarded with horror?

## SECTION VI.

*“Shall the sword devour forever?”*

That wars have been so over-ruled by God, as to be the occasion of some benefits to mankind, will not be denied; for the same may be said of every fashion or custom that ever was popular among men. War may have been the occasion of advancing useful arts and sciences, and even of the spread of the gospel. But we are not to do evil that good may come, nor to countenance evil because God may over-rule it for good.

One advantage of war, which has often been mentioned, is this—it gives opportunity for the display of extraordinary talents, of daring enterprize and intrepidity. But let robbery and piracy become as popular as war has been, and will not these customs give as great opportunity for the display of the same talents and qualities of mind? Shall we therefore encourage robbery and piracy? Indeed, it may be asked, do we not encourage these crimes? For what is modern warfare but a popular, refined and legalized mode of robbery, piracy, and murder, preceded by a proclamation, giving notice of the purpose of the war maker? But whether such a proclamation changes the character of the following enormities, is a question to be decided at a higher court than that of any earthly sovereign, and by a law superior to the law of nations.

The answer of a pirate to Alexander the Great, was as just as it was severe: “By what right,” said the king, “do you infest the seas?” The pirate replied, “By the same that you infest the universe. But because I do it in a small

ship, I am called a robber ; and because you do the same acts with a great fleet, you are called a conqueror."

Equally just was the language of the Scythian ambassadors to the same deluded monarch : " Thou boastest that the only design of thy marches is to extirpate robbers. *Thou thyself art the greatest robber in the world.*"

May we then plead for the custom of war, because it produces such mighty robbers as Alexander ? Or if once in an age it should produce such a character as Washington, will this make amends for the slaughter of twenty millions of human beings, and all the other concomitant evils of war ?

If the characters of such men as Alexander had been held in just abhorrence by mankind, this single circumstance would probably have saved many millions from untimely death. But the celebrity which delusion has given to that desolating robber, and the renown attached to his splendid crimes, have excited the ambition of others, in every succeeding age, and filled the world with misery and blood.

Is it not then time for christians to learn *not* to attach glory to guilt, or to praise actions which God will condemn ? That Alexander possessed talents worthy of admiration, will be admitted. But when such talents are prostituted to the vile purpose of military fame, by spreading destruction and misery through the world, a character is formed, which should be branded with everlasting infamy. And nothing perhaps short of the commission of such atrocious deeds, can more endanger the welfare of community, than the applause given to successful military desperadoes. Murder and robbery are not the less criminal for being perpetrated by a king, or a mighty warrior. Nor will the applause of deluded mortals secure such monsters from the vengeance of Heaven.

Dr. Prideaux states, that in the fifty battles fought by Caesar, he slew *one million, one hundred and ninety two thousand* of his enemies. If to this number we add the loss of troops on his own side, and the slaughter of women and children on both sides, we shall probably have a total of **TWO MILLIONS** of human beings, sacrificed to the ambition of one man.

If we assign an equal number to Alexander, and the same to Napoleon, which we probably may do with justice, then to *three* military butchers, we may ascribe the untimely death of *six* millions of the human family : a number equal to the whole population of the United States, in the year 1800. Is it not then reasonable to believe, that a greater number of human beings have been slain by the murderous custom of war, than the whole amount of the present population of the world ? To what heathen deity was there ever offered such a multitude of human sacrifices, as have been offered to human ambition ?

Shall then the christian world remain silent in regard to the enormity of this custom, and even applaud the deeds of men, who were a *curse* to the age in which they lived ? men, whose talents were employed, not in advancing the happiness of the human race, but in spreading desolation and misery through the world ! On the same principle that such men are applauded, we may applaud the chief of a band of robbers and pirates in proportion to his ingenuity, intrepidity, and address, in doing mischief. If the chief displays these energies of mind in a high degree in a successful course of plundering and murder, then he is a "*mighty hunter*," a man of great renown.

But if we attach glory to such exploits, do we not encourage others to adopt the same road to fame ? Besides, would not such applause betray a most depraved taste ; a taste which makes no proper distinction between virtue and vice, or doing good and doing mischief ; a taste to be captivated with the glare of bold exploits, but regardless of the *end* to which they were directed, the *means* by which they were accomplished, the *misery* which they occasioned to others, and the light in which they must be viewed by a benevolent God ?

## SECTION VII.

An important question now occurs. By what means is it possible to produce such a change in the state of society, and the views of christian nations, that every ruler shall feel that his own honor, safety and happiness, depend on his displaying a pacific spirit, and forbearing to engage in offensive wars ? Is

it not possible to form powerful peace societies, in every nation of Christendom, whose object shall be, to support government and secure the nation from war ?

In such societies we may hope to engage every true minister of the Prince of peace, and every christian who possesses the temper of his Master. In this number would be included a large portion of important civil characters.

Having formed societies for this purpose, let the contributions be liberal, in some measure corresponding with the magnitude and importance of the object. Let these be judiciously appropriated to the purpose of diffusing light, and the spirit of peace in every direction, and for exciting a just abhorrence of war in every breast.

Let printing presses be established in sufficient numbers to fill every land with news papers, tracts and periodical works, adapted to the pacific design of the societies. Let these all be calculated for the support and encouragement of good rulers, and for the cultivation of a mild and pacific temper among every class of citizens.

The object would be so perfectly harmonious with the spirit, the design, and the glory of the gospel, that it might be frequently the subject of discussion in the pulpit ; the subject of sabbath and every day conversation, and be introduced into our daily prayers to God, whether in public or private.

Another means of advancing the object, deserves particular consideration ; namely, early education. This grand object should have a place in every plan of education, in families, common schools, academies and universities.

“ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The power of education has been tried, to make children of a ferocious, blood-thirsty character. Let it now have a fair chance, to see what it will do towards making mild, friendly and peaceful citizens.

As there is an aversion to war in the breast of a large majority of people in every civilized community ; and as its evils have been recently felt in every christian nation ; is there not ground to hope, that it would be as easy to excite a disposition

for peace, as a disposition for war ? If then, peace societies should be formed, and such means be put in operation, as have been suggested, is it not very certain, that the most beneficial effects would result ? Would they not gradually produce an important change in the views and state of society, and give a new character to christian nations ? What institution or project would more naturally unite all pious and virtuous men ? And on what efforts could we more reasonably hope for the blessing of the God of peace ?

Should prudent, vigorous, and well conducted efforts be made, in a century from this time, the nations of christendom may consider human sacrifices, made by war, in the same light they now view the ancient sacrifices to Moloch ; or in the light of wanton and deliberate murder. And such a change in the views of men must conduce to the security and stability of human governments, and to the felicity of the world. As soon as christian nations are impressed with the importance of this change, they may find access to the heathen. But while christians indulge the custom of war, which is in truth the very worst custom in the world, with what face can they reprove the heathen, or assume among them the office of instructors !

“ Physician, heal thyself.”

The Bible Societies, already formed in various parts of the world, must naturally, and even necessarily aid the object now proposed. Indeed, the two objects are so congenial, that whatever promotes the one, will aid the other. Nor is it easy to see how any Bible Society could refrain from voluntarily affording all possible encouragement to peace societies. The same may be said of all missionary societies, and societies for propagating the gospel. Should these all cordially cooperate, they must form a most powerful association.

But our hopes and expectations are not limited here. The societies of Friends and Shakers will come in of course, and cordially contribute to the glorious object. May we not also expect a ready acquiescence from the particular churches of every denomination in the land ? And why may we not look to the various literary and political societies, for aid in a plan,

which has the security, the peace, and the happiness of the world for its object.

That there are obstacles and objections to be encountered we cannot deny; but it is confidently believed, that there are none insurmountable; because God will aid in such a cause, and the time is at hand, when his prediction shall be fulfilled.

As the object is not of a party nature, and as party distinctions and party purposes have been excluded from the discussion, it is hoped no objection will arise from the present state of political parties in this country. The supposed delusion in respect to war, is confined to no nation, nor to any political sect in any country. What has been said on the subject has not been designed for the purpose of reproach against any class of men; but with a desire to befriend and benefit all who have not examined the subject; and to rouse christians to one united and vigorous effort to bless the world with peace.

An eloquent speech, delivered by Mr. Wilberforce in the British Parliament, in favor of propagating christianity in India, with a view to abolish human sacrifices in that country, contains some observations, which we hope he will repeat in the same house on the present subject:

“It was,” said he, “formerly my task to plead the cause of a people, whose woes affected every heart, and who were finally rescued from the situation in which they groaned, by the abolition of the slave trade. That cause was doubtless the cause of suffering humanity; but I declare, that if we entirely exclude the consideration of religion, humanity appears to me to be still more concerned in the cause I am now pleading, than in that for which I was formerly the advocate.”—“I, for my part, consider it as absolute blasphemy to believe that that great Being, to whom we owe our existence, has doomed so large a portion of mankind to remain forever in that state in which we see the natives of India at this day. I am confident his providence has furnished remedies fitted to the case, and I hold it to be our duty to apply them. And I am satisfied, that not only may this be safely attempted, but that its accomplishment will be in the highest degree beneficial.”

May God grant that this powerful advocate for “suffering humanity” may have his heart fervently engaged for the abolition of the *war trade*. Here he may find a new and ample field for the display of his piety, his philanthropy and his eloquence. With the greatest propriety he may state, that the miseries, occasioned by the universal custom of war, are far more dreadful, than those occasioned by either of the limited customs, for the abolition of which he has so honorably and successfully contended.

If it would be blasphemy to believe that God has doomed so great a portion of his creatures, as the natives of India, to remain forever the subjects of their present delusions respecting human sacrifices ; can it be less than blasphemy to believe that he has doomed not only all Christendom, but all the nations of the earth, to be forever so deluded, as to support the most desolating custom, which ever resulted from human depravity, or which ever afflicted the race of Adam ? Here with sincerity I can adopt the words of Mr. Wilberforce—“I am confident that his providence has furnished remedies fitted to the case ; and I hold it to be our duty to apply them.”

I have till now avoided the mention of our present war, that nothing should appear calculated to excite party feelings. But as the present calamity is severely felt, I must be permitted to express my hope, that the affliction will favor the present object. If our distresses may be the occasion of opening the eyes of this people to see the delusions of war in general, and of exciting them to suitable exertions to prevent a return of such a calamity, an important benefit may result not only to posterity, but to the world. For if suitable exertions should be made in this country, the influence will not be bounded by the Atlantic ; it will cross the ocean, and find its way into the Bible Societies, and other religious societies in Great Britain, and on the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Nor will it be many years before it will find access to the houses of legislation and the palaces of kings.

Here christians of every sect may find an object worthy of their attention, and in which they may cordially unite. For

this object they may with propriety leave behind all party zeal and party distinctions, and bury their animosities in one united effort, to give peace to the world.

Let lawyers, politicians and divines, and men of every class who can write or speak, consecrate their talents to the diffusion of light, and love, and peace. Should there be an effort, such as the object demands, God will grant his blessing, posterity will be greatful, heaven will be filled with joy and praise, and “the sword shall *not* devour forever.”

### SECTION VIII.

Let not the universality of the custom be regarded as an objection to making the attempt. If the custom be wicked and destructive, the more universal, the more important is a reformation. If war is ever to be set aside, an effort must some time be made; and why not now, as well as at any future day? What objection can now be stated, which may not be brought forward at any after period?

If men must have objects for the display of heroism, let their intrepidity be shown in firmly meeting the formidable prejudices of a world in favor of war. Here is an opportunity for the display of such heroism as will occasion no remorse on a dying bed, and such as God will approve at the final reckoning. In this cause, ardent zeal, genuine patriotism, undaunted fortitude, the spirit of enterprize, and every quality of mind worthy of a hero, may be gloriously displayed. Who ever displayed a more heroic spirit than Saint Paul? For such heroism and love of country as he displayed, the object now proposed will open the most ample field at home and abroad.

That there is nothing in the nature of mankind, which renders war necessary and unavoidable—nothing which inclines them to it, which may not be overcome by the power of education, may appear from what is discoverable in the two sects already mentioned. The Quakers and Shakers are of the same nature with other people, “men of like passions” with those who uphold the custom of war. All the difference between them and others results from education and habit. The

principles of their teachers are diffused through their societies, impressed on the minds of old and young; and an aversion to war and violence is excited, which becomes habitual, and has a governing influence on their hearts, their passions and their lives.

If then it has been proved to be *possible*, by the force of education, to produce such an aversion to war, that people will not even *defend* their own lives by acts of violence; shall it be thought impossible by similar means, to destroy the popularity of *offensive* war, and exclude the deadly custom from the abodes of men?

The following things will perhaps be generally admitted; that the christian religion has abolished the practice of enslaving captives, and in several respects mitigated the evils of war, by introducing milder usages; that if the temper of our Saviour should universally prevail among men, wars *must cease* to the ends of the earth; that the scriptures give reason to hope such a time of peace will result from the influence of the christian religion.

If these views and expectations are well founded, does it not follow of course, that the spirit and custom of war is directly opposed to the principles and spirit of the gospel; that in proportion as the gospel has its proper effect on the minds of men, an *aversion* to war must be excited; and that it is the duty of every christian to do all in his power to bring the custom into disrepute, and to effect its abolition?

Can it be consistent with due regard to the gospel, for christians to hold their peace, while they see a custom prevailing, which annually sweeps off myriads of their brethren, hurrying them into eternity by violence and murder? Can they forbear to exert themselves, to put an end to this *voluntary plague*? Can we feel a conviction that war is in its nature opposed to the principles and spirit of our religion, and that it is the purpose of God to put an end to this scourge by the influence of the gospel; and still sleep on without any effort to produce the effect, which we believe is intended by our heavenly Father?

If the christian religion is to put an end to war, it must be by the efforts of those who are under its influence. So long therefore as christians acquiesce in the custom, the desirable event will be delayed.

Christianity is not itself a powerful intelligent *agent*. It is neither a God, an angel, nor a man. It is only a system of divine instructions, relating to *duty* and *happiness*; to be used by men for their own benefit, the benefit of each other, and the honor of its Author. Like all other instructions, they are of no use any farther than they are regarded and reduced to practice.

In what way then is it possible that christianity should put an end to war, but by enlightening the minds of men, as to the evil of the custom, and exciting them to an opposite course of conduct? Is it *possible* that the custom of war should be abolished by the influence of religion, while christians themselves are its advocates?

If God has appointed that men shall be saved by the *preaching* of the gospel, the gospel *must be preached*, or the *end* will never be accomplished. So if he has appointed that by the same gospel this world shall be delivered from war, this also must be effected by similar means. The tendency of the gospel to this effect must be illustrated and enforced; its opposition to war must be displayed in the *lives of christians*; and men must be influenced by gospel motives to cease from destroying one another.

There are other effects, which we expect will be produced by christianity, namely, the abolition of *heathen idolatry*, and the various modes of offering *human sacrifices*. But how are these events to be brought about? Do we expect that our Bibles will spread their covers for wings, fly through the world, and convert the nations, without the agency of christians? Should we expect the gospel would ever convert the heathen from their idolatry, if those, who profess to be its friends, should themselves generally encourage idolaters in their present courses, by a compliance with their customs? Such expectations would be just as reasonable, as to expect the gospel

will occasion wars to cease, without the exertions of christians, and while they countenance the custom by their own examples.

It will perhaps be pleaded, that mankind are not yet sufficiently enlightened, to apply the principles of the gospel for the abolition of war ; and that we must wait for a more improved state of society. *Improved in what?* in the science of blood? Are such improvements to prepare the way for peace? Why not wait a few centuries, until the natives of India become more improved in their idolatrous customs, before we attempt to convert them to christianity? Do we expect that by continuing in the practice of idolatry, their minds will be prepared to receive the gospel? If not, let us be consistent, and while we use means for the conversion of heathens, let means also be used for the conversion of christians. For war is in fact a heathenish and savage custom, of the most malignant, most desolating, and most horrible character. It is the greatest curse, and results from the grossest delusions that ever afflicted a guilty world.

#### NOTE.

After the preceding pages were chiefly in type, I saw for the first time "The COMPLAINT of PEACE" and "ANTIPOLEMON," written by Erasmus. The coincidence of opinions and remarks must strike every reader, who shall compare the writings of Erasmus with this Review. He will, however, also perceive a disparity of eloquence not much to the honor of the latter. But should the Review be only the occasion of exciting Christians to read the more important work of Erasmus, my labor will neither be in vain nor regretted. In his discussion of the subject, there is a display of reason, religion and eloquence, calculated to convince every mind, which is not strongly fortified by the delusions of prejudice, and to interest every heart which is less hardened than Pharaoh's. It is indeed astonishing that even popish prejudices could resist the force of his reasoning against the custom of war. As a specimen of his spirit and style, we quote the following passages, in reference to the custom of using the symbol of the Cross for a standard, partaking of the Lord's Suppér before going to battle, and saying the Lord's prayer.

" The absurdest circumstance of all those respecting the use of the cross as a standard is, that you see it glittering and waving high in air, in both the contending armies at once. Divine service is performed to the same Christ in both armies at the same time. What a shocking sight! Lo! crosses dashing against crosses, and CHRIST on this side firing bullets

at **christ** on the other ; **Cross** against **Cross**, and **Christ** against **Christ** !  
He adds :—

“ Let us now imagine we hear a soldier among these *fighting* Christians saying the Lord’s *prayer*. “ **Our father**,” says he : O, hardened wretch can you call **HIM Father**, when you are just going to cut **your brother’s** throat ? “ **Hallowed be thy name** :” how can the name of God be more impiously *unhallowed*, than by mutual bloody murder among you, his sons “ **Thy kingdom come** :” do you pray for the coming of **his kingdom**, while you are endeavoring to establish an *earthly despotism*, by the spilling of the blood of God’s sons and subjects ? “ **Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven** :” His *will* in heaven is for **PEACE**, but you are now meditating **WAR** ! Dare you say to your Father in heaven, “ *Give us this day our daily bread*, when you are going the next minute to burn your **brother’s** *cornfields* ; and had rather lose the benefits of them yourself, than suffer him to enjoy them unmolested ? With what face can you say, “ *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*,” when so far from *forgiving* your own brother, you are going, with all the haste you can, to *murder* him in cold blood, for an alleged trespass, which after all is but *imaginary* ? Do you presume to deprecate *danger* of “ *temptation*,” who, not without great danger to yourself, are doing all you can to force your **brother** into danger ! Do you deserve to be *delivered from evil*, that is, from the *evil being* to whose impulse you submit yourself, and by whose spirit you are guided, in contriving the greatest possible evil to your brother ? ”

It may be doubted whether a complete history of all the conduct of infernal spirits, would contain any thing more inconsistent, more abominable or more to be deplored, than has appeared in the history of *warring christians*. To behold two contending armies, from christian nations, so deluded as mutually to offer prayers to the same benevolent God, for success in their attempts to butcher each other, is enough to fill the mind of any considerate person with amazement and horror. Yea, a sight like this might cause weeping in heaven, and triumph in hell !

## THE FRIEND OF PEACE,

No. I.

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A SPECIAL INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
UNITED STATES AND OMAR, AN OFFICER DISMIS-  
SED FOR DUELLING.

*President.* **Y**OUR countenance, sir, I think I have seen before, but your name I do not recollect.

*Omar.* May it please your excellency, I am Omar, the man who was lately an officer in the military service, and who was dismissed for some concern in an affair of honor. I have for some time been desirous of an interview on that subject.

*P.* It was painful to me, to issue the order for your removal. I had no personal animosity against you ; but I had become convinced, that unless something could be done to check that needless and inhuman custom, many valuable men would lose their lives, without any service to their country.

*O.* I was indeed offended, when I was informed of your determination ; but afterwards I took the matter under serious consideration, and became fully convinced, that duelling is a wicked, unwarrantable custom, which occasions the sacrifice of many lives, and the distress of many families, without any benefit to community. I therefore entirely approve your conduct in removing me from office, and thank you for your fidelity.

*P.* I am much pleased to see in you a disposition so friendly and magnanimous. Your views of duelling are clearly correct. I sincerely wish they may become universal, that human lives may no more be sacrificed to false principles of honor. You, my good friend, now stand on fair ground to be eminently useful in preserving the lives of valuable members of society,

by an effort to open their eyes to the enormity of a custom, which has made such deplorable inroads among men of rank. No one disputes your valor, and as you have become convinced of the evil of the custom, your influence may go far towards its abolition. Only render the custom direputable, and it will wither away like a weed pulled up by the roots and exposed to the heat of the sun. Popularity is the only element in which such a murderous custom can thrive, or even live, among men of reflection. To save your fellow men from untimely death, is an object which your benevolent mind will pursue with ardor. And any aid which it may be proper for me to give, will not be withheld.

*O.* I thank you, sir, for the kind sentiments you have expressed. I think I should be willing to exert myself to put an end to duelling, if I could see a fair prospect of success. But you are aware, sir, that the prepossessions of many gentlemen, especially in the southern states, are very strong in favor of the custom. Should I write or speak much on the subject, I shall probably be dubbed with the title of *puritan* or *fanatic*, and bring on myself much reproach, without being able to do any considerable good.

*P.* A man of pure mind and benevolent heart, has little to fear from being called a *puritan*. As to *fanatics*, I am not acquainted with any persons more deserving that name, than those who will wantonly sacrifice their own lives, and the lives of others, to false principles of honor, without even the prospect of benefit to themselves, their families, or their country.

*O.* I feel the force of your remarks. I am disposed to do what I can to preserve men from untimely death ; but I must rely on your patronage.

*P.* Of that you may feel assured, in so good a cause. I have long lamented the prevalence of duelling, but I never saw before so fair a prospect of opposing it with effect. I am determined to bear a decided testimony against it, while I hold the presidency, by dismissing every military officer in the army or the navy, who shall be guilty of giving or accepting a challenge, or of instigating others to such a combat. I indeed

hope, that what has been already done will prevent a repetition of such murderous folly, for I have no wish for an occasion to express my displeasure against military men ; but my resolution is fixed. They must forbear, or be dismissed.

*O.* Decision in this particular will, I think, make a powerful impression ; and it is a fortunate circumstance, that the Prince Regent of Great Britain has adopted a similar course. This places the military officers under both governments on the same ground ; and the cooperation of different governments for the same benevolent object, will render the efforts doubly efficacious.

*P.* You remember the impression which was made on the public mind, by the fatal duel between General Hamilton and Colonel Burr. I think a very great portion of gentlemen at that time would have been really glad to see the custom fairly set aside. Many, I am persuaded, feel as Hamilton did, as to the propriety and morality of the custom ; and would never comply with it, if any thing could be done, which, in their view, would free them from odium in a refusal. Now, as the custom wholly depends on a delusive opinion, like that which formerly prevailed of burning heretics, any measures which may be adopted to change the opinions of those who favor the custom, will tend to its abolition. Would it not then be wise to form societies, in which the subject should be fully discussed, and whose object should be to effect a revolution in the opinions of that class of people who regard the custom as honorable ?

*O.* Such a plan, I think, would have a happy tendency. I know of a number, who sincerely regret that the custom was ever adopted ; and who, I think, would cheerfully associate for the purpose you propose, could they only be headed by some powerful character. The project would be greatly favored by this circumstance, that the sentiments of serious people in general, and indeed of a vast portion of community, are already so decidedly opposed to the custom, that they would rejoice in any effort to bring it into universal disrepute. In New England the custom is generally regarded with abhorrence, as a *privileged mode of murder*, assumed by gentlemen, in violation

of the laws of justice and reason, as well as the laws of the land. Thousands, in perhaps every state, view the matter in the same light, and the more it is examined, the more it will be abhorred. Could we only obtain the concurrence of twenty persons, such as I could name, to unite with the mass of people already prepared for the enterprize, I think it would be possible in twenty years, to render the custom of duelling as perfectly odious, as that of horse stealing.

*P.* "The power of reasoning," says Dr. Reid, "in those who have it, may be abused in morals, as in other matters. To a man who uses it with an upright heart, and a single eye to find what is his duty, it will be of great use; but when it is used to justify what a man has a strong inclination to do, it will only serve to deceive himself and others. When a man can reason, his passions will reason, and they are the most cunning sophists we meet with." It is by the reasoning of "the passions," these "cunning sophists," that gentlemen persuade themselves that they may be justified in exposing their own lives, and the lives of others, in the custom of duelling. If they would lay aside their passions, and reason impartially, they would easily see, that it would be as justifiable in any other class of citizens, even in women and children, to adopt a murderous mode of settling controversies, as it is in them. Yet they would now use their influence to have other people hanged for imitating their own example. It is indeed amazing that men of sense can be thus bewildered by the influence of their passions, and the popularity of a barbarous custom, which had its origin in an age of savage manners. What security would be given to the lives of gentlemen, and from what anxiety would their families be relieved, if this custom should become disreputable among that class of men ! The fate of Hamilton and Burr is a solemn lesson to all men of reputation, who favor the custom. Burr succeeded in killing the object of his envy, but what has been his own fate ? What advantage has he gained ? Before the duel he sustained a high rank in society, but since, like his predecessor Cain, he has been a vagabond in the earth.

O. The public have no occasion to thank Colonel Burr; yet I am of opinion that his duel has had a favorable influence against the practice. Indeed I have believed that my dismissal was occasioned by the influence which that event had on your mind, and the minds of others. But still I rejoice in the issue. It has been useful to me, and I hope it will be so to others. Various circumstances concurred to make the duel of those men serviceable in the way I have mentioned. Hamilton was unquestionably one of the most eminent men in the nation, in the view of both political parties. His fall occasioned a shock like that of an earthquake, and prepared the minds of the multitude to listen to whatever was said against the custom. The clergy availed themselves of this opportunity, to express their abhorrence of the practice; and to exhibit it in the most odious colors; and what they said was listened to with seriousness and gratification. The trivial nature, also, of the offence, which Burr made the ground of the challenge, was calculated to lead people to regard his conduct with detestation.

P. Another thing may be mentioned, which had great effect—the deliberate testimony which Hamilton gave in writing against the custom, as immoral and murderous. This testimony was evidently written with a kind of presentiment that the duel would cost him his life. That a man of his giant mind should be seduced by popular opinion, to comply with a custom, which he conscientiously believed to be wicked, was truly extraordinary. Judicious and reflecting persons could easily perceive by the writing which he left, that the convictions of his own mind were decidedly against the custom, as of a barbarous and immoral character; and that his compliance was the effect of what he believed to be the popular opinion among gentlemen of honor. He evidently sacrificed his own life to an opinion which he believed to be erroneous, and to a custom which he regarded as abominable.

The offence, on which the challenge was given, was indeed of a trivial nature, compared with the mode of obtaining redress. At a time when party spirit is prevalent in a community, as it then was and is now, if such things as Burr made

the ground of the challenge, may be regarded as sufficient to justify a duel, fifty thousand may be fought in this country every year. And if every class of people may follow such examples, as surely they may if commendable, the custom would sweep the land of its inhabitants like a general plague. No person would be secure from falling a victim to the prejudices and passions of some political opponent. Men of rank should certainly consider what would be the consequences, if all other classes of community should follow their example, in making thus light of human life. Indeed the offences in general, on the ground of which duels are fought, are hardly worthy of the notice of a man of a noble and magnanimous mind. They are generally the ebullitions of passion and prejudice, to which all men are liable, and none more so than duellists. The custom is so far from being honorable, or a compliance with it an indication of a generous mind, that it is an indication of petulance and malignity unbecoming any man of honor. By a conformity to this custom, men do not even rise above the most petulant and ferocious of the brute creation. They fall far below the magnanimity of the mastiff, who can hear the barking of twenty snappish curs, without breaking his trot, or being moved so much as to turn his head to notice them.

The custom of duelling cherishes and gives scope to the vilest passions of the human heart, renders men bloody and ferocious on principle, and tends to exterminate the kind affections, which are most essential to social happiness.

To see men of rank thus trifle with human life, must naturally have considerable effect on the other classes of society. It must excite abhorrence, or inspire them with similar feelings and sentiments. The more, therefore, this custom prevails, the greater must be the insecurity of human life, the greater the corruption of morals in society, and the more a blood thirsty disposition will prevail through the land.

*O.* Your excellency will excuse my weakness—

*P.* You seem, sir, to be oppressed with grief, or some other emotion, for which I cannot account.

*O.* *Regret, shame, admiration, and astonishment,* have all combined, and overcome me. I regret that I ever gave the least countenance to a custom so sanguinary. I am ashamed that I so long remained blind to the obvious dictates of reason and religion, and that I suffered my mind to be seduced by the sophistical reasoning of the passions. I was struck with admiration at your manner of expressing the real sentiments of my own heart. I may truly say, as honest and illiterate individuals often say on hearing an eloquent, intelligent man, "you have expressed my views of the subject better than I could have expressed them myself." But I was also astonished.

*P.* What excited your astonishment?

*Q.* I was astonished, that while you see so clearly the immoral nature, and the demoralizing and fatal tendency of duelling, you have not seemed aware how easily your remarks might be applied to another custom, which has been still more popular, and more destructive.

*P.* You mean probably the ancient custom of killing men for their religious opinions, when they happened to dissent from the creed of the majority.

*O.* No, sir; that is not the custom I had in view, but one as unreasonable, and more destructive to the lives of men. Perhaps at an earlier moment of our interview I should have disclosed more fully the result of those reflections, to which I was led by being removed from office. But I have felt a delicacy in the affair, and some fears lest I should say something which would not be so acceptable to your excellency, as what I have said on a custom which we mutually abhor.

*P.* The ingenuous and amiable spirit you have displayed, in regard to your removal from office, has gained my confidence and esteem. You may speak without reserve. I think I shall hear with patience, and I hope with impartiality.

*O.* To be frank, sir, when I had reflected on the moral nature of duelling, and become fully convinced of its injustice and enormity, I was then led to compare this custom with that of war, for which also I had been an advocate. The

more I pondered, the more I was struck with the similarity of the principles, on which the two customs have been supported. On the whole, I became fully convinced, that war has no advantage of duelling in respect to its being *necessary*, *justifiable*, or *honorable*; and that it is as much worse than duelling, as it is more destructive to the lives of innocent people.

*P.* You surprize me, sir ! Are you not aware that war has been admitted for the settlement of national controversies, in all ages and all countries, as far back as history extends ?

*O.* I am, sir : But had duelling been as uniformly and universally admitted, as the best method of settling disputes between individuals, would that amount to proof of the propriety of the custom ?

*P.* It would not. There is, however, a striking dissimilarity in the two cases. Duelling results from the folly and rashness of presumptuous individuals, who assume a right to expose their own lives, and to destroy one another. But war is made by *lawful authority*, by the deliberate counsels of the rulers of a nation.

*O.* Suppose then, that the rulers of a civilized nation should deliberately authorize duels, as the best mode of deciding private controversies ; would this abate the malignant and odious nature of the custom ? And would not such a set of rulers be justly considered as barbarians ?

*P.* Be this as it may ; you will admit that the *offences*, for which wars are declared, are of a more serious nature, than those for which duels are fought.

*O.* No, sir, not always. One half the wars in christendom have been declared without any real offence at all, or on as frivolous pretexts as challenges are given by duellists. Offences may be called either great or small only by comparison ; and to make a fair estimate in the two cases, we should compare the offences with the probable consequences of an appeal to arms. The offences for which duels are fought appear trifling, compared with the probable and the possible consequences of seeking redress by a challenge. When a duel is to be fought for the decision of a private dispute between two gen-

tlemen, it is *probable*, that *one*, and *possible* that *both* the combatants will be killed ; and that one or both of their family connexions will be subjected to mourning and woe. Now certainly it must be an offence of a more serious nature than usually occurs, to justify an appeal to pistols or swords, with such awful prospects as the result ; and it is in this view of the matter that the usual pretexts for duels appear altogether insufficient and trifling.

*P.* This is granted.

*O.* Well, sir, in the present state of the civilized nations of christendom, when a war is declared, it must be done with a *probability* that sixty thousand lives will be sacrificed, and a much greater number of families subjected to severe affliction ; and with a *possibility* that ten times this amount of suffering will be the consequence of making war. In what instance, then, has a war been declared, when the offence was not trifling, compared with the probable and possible consequences of an appeal to arms ? The challenge for a duel exposes but *two* lives ; the declaration of war as really exposes a hundred thousand. Are then the offences, for which war is usually declared, a hundred thousand times greater, than those for which challenges are given ? If not, they are very insufficient to justify war.

*P.* But the *honor* of a nation will not allow a government to submit to insult or aggression. If they submit in one case they may in another ; and every instance of submission is an invitation to renewed insult. It is of the highest importance to a nation, that its rulers should be ever ready to vindicate its *honor*, by an appeal to arms.

*O.* And what, may it please your excellency, does all this amount to, but the plea of a duellist from the lips of a ruler ? You have admitted that duelling is practised in support of *false principles of honor*, and that the sacrifices thus made are wanton and needless. But an appeal to arms in vindication of honor, is no more necessary on the part of a nation, than on the part of a military officer, or any other gentleman. The delusion is the same in both cases—dishonorable and ruinous

sacrifices are made to a *phantom* called *honor*, while *TRUE HONOR* is but little regarded.

*P.* But what could the rulers of a nation do in a case like ours before the late war? We complained of wrongs, repeated and urged our complaints over and over again, but the British government forbore redress, till our patience was exhausted.

*O.* What would you advise a gentleman of honor to do in a similar case? His brother has insulted him, or said something by which his honor is wounded. The complainant has repeatedly stated his grievances, but redress is delayed. Would you advise him to send a challenge, and then, if he can, blow a ball through his brother's heart? Would you also advise him to kill off half a score of his brother's family, who never have done him, nor even wished him, the least injury?

*P.* Not so! this would be horrible; but you have not given a direct answer to my question; *what could have been done to avoid the war?*

*O.* THE VERY SAME, SIR, THAT WAS DONE TO MAKE PEACE. Nothing more, I think, could have been necessary. Such a treaty as we now have, had it been made before the war, would have saved all the sacrifices of blood and treasure on both sides of the contest. And your excellency will not deny, that such a treaty might have been obtained before the war, at less expense than the support of one of our commissioners at Ghent.

*P.* But the war has *raised our national character*, and evinced that other nations are not to injure us with impunity.

*O.* May it please your excellency, I admit that the war has raised our national character just as a duellist raises his own character when he gives a challenge, *fights bravely*, injures his antagonist, receives a wound which must be a burden for life, and then makes peace without any other concession or recompense.

*P.* I will not impute to you any unfriendly design, but your remarks *seem* to have a bearing against me, as president of the nation.

*O.* Be assured, sir, that nothing unfriendly or disrespectful

has been or will be intended by me. I have been myself an advocate both for war and duelling. The measures you adopted to check duelling, were the occasion of my present views on both subjects. On the subject of duelling we are now perfectly agreed. I wish to recompense your favor to me, by convincing you that war and duelling are equally unjustifiable.

*P.* It would be awful to me, to think of the havoc of lives during the late war, should I become of your opinion. I think, however, no person acquainted with me can say, that I am naturally of a malignant and sanguinary character. Some circumstances had influence to induce me to consent to the war, which it may not be proper to name. But of this you may rest assured, that I did not consent to the war under a conviction, that the *custom of war* was murderous and unjustifiable, as General Hamilton consented to a duel with Burr.

*O.* By what he supposed to be the popular opinion, General Hamilton was induced to think that, all things considered, it was better for him to comply with a custom, which he believed to be immoral, than to refuse. And although your excellency had not been convinced that the custom of war was unjustifiable, yet some respectable characters have been of the opinion, that you consented to the war, not so much from a conviction of its justice, as from a desire to gratify some others, and to give scope to what you thought was the popular feeling. But whether this apprehension be correct, I pretend not to say. I believe that your friends in general do not impute to you a sanguinary character.

*P.* I verily thought, and still think, that we had received injuries from Great Britain; I supposed the custom of war to be justifiable; and I had reason to think that the war would be popular with that part of the nation which raised me to the presidency. The war has not, indeed, produced all the benefits I hoped for: but peace is again restored, and I regard it as a blessing. Your remarks on war have made some impression on my mind. If I have been in an error, it is of a serious nature, and I wish to know the truth: But the evening is far spent. If you wish to make any farther communications to me on the subject of war, will it not be best to do it

by letter? In this way you will have opportunity to set your arguments in the strongest light, and I shall have opportunity to examine them with greater attention and advantage. Whatever may be the result, I will read with care, and endeavor to weigh your reasoning in an even balance.

O. Both your candor and your proposal strike my mind agreeably. I shall reflect on them with pleasure, and I think I shall write, for my heart is filled with the subject, and from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, and the pen moves with ease. You may probably think me an enthusiast; but my enthusiasm leads me to endeavor to save men's lives, and not to destroy them. Such enthusiasm I would gladly diffuse through the land, and through the world. Should it become as general and as ardent, as has been the destructive enthusiasm for war and violence, our present peace will never be interrupted. Without the least hesitation, I submit to the good sense of your excellency one question, and with that shall close, on my part, the present agreeable interview—Which is the most to be commended and encouraged, an enthusiasm to *save*, or an enthusiasm to *destroy*?

P. You do me justice in believing, that I cannot hesitate in so plain a case. Farewell, my very good friend, farewell.

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SIX LETTERS FROM OMAR TO THE PRESIDENT.

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LETTER I.

SIR,

ENCOURAGED by your generous proposal, I now take my pen to express to you more fully my convictions and my views relating to war.

Your excellency is aware, that ardor of mind leads to the use of strong language, in expressing opinions, and in making remarks on what is believed to be inhuman and unjustifiable. But whatever language my enthusiasm to save the lives of men may lead me to adopt, I beg you would consider my letters as written with the same feelings of friendship and respect, which you observed in me during the late interview. I do not consider you, or any of the rulers of our nation, as un-

der any greater mistake on the subject of war, than what has been common to the rulers of other nations, and to people in general ; and whatever bearing my remarks may have on the late war, they will not proceed from enmity to any person concerned in that lamentable affair. My object is, if possible, to prevent a recurrence of a similar calamity, by exposing what I believe to be the misapprehensions from which wars have originated. I do not pretend to say, that we had not as good ground for declaring war against Great Britain, as has been generally found by war-makers in past ages, and other countries. By examining history I have become fully convinced, that the pretexts for war have generally been of a very trivial character ; and that the real objects of war have commonly been concealed under a huge proclamation of pretended injuries, or of some real injuries artfully and wantonly exaggerated. Having premised these things, I now proceed to the intended remarks.

Your excellency removed me from office, because you had become convinced, that unless a check could be given to the custom of duelling, many valuable men would lose their lives, without any service to their country. This I admitted as a sufficient reason against duelling, and for your treatment of me. But for a similar reason I object to wars, and wish the custom abolished. Let us, sir, examine the subject fairly, and enquire whether the lives lost in war are not sacrificed " without any service to their country." We will look at some of the most celebrated wars.

Alexander the Great was a wonderful war-maker. In his wars a vast multitude of men lost their lives. But what advantage to Macedon, or to any other country, were the sacrifices made to the ambition of that celebrated conqueror ? Did he not distress his own country, as well as every country he invaded ? Were not more lives lost in his wars, than have been lost in all the duels since the day that " Cain slew his brother ?" And what more advantage resulted to any nation from the loss of lives in the wars of Alexander, than from those which have been sacrificed in duelling ?

Not needlessly to multiply examples, we will now come

down to our own times. No nation probably in our day has sacrificed more lives in war than the French. Napoleon was another Alexander, and he kept a large portion of the French nation dressed in mourning, or oppressed with grief during his reign. Has France, sir, been benefitted by this immense sacrifice? That people have indeed obtained the name of being *brave to fight*. But is not this nearly the sum of their *gain*? Let this be compared with the *loss*. Will the *credit* of fighting bravely cancel the *debt* of millions of lives sacrificed, and the distress of more millions of mourners? If not, it may be presumed, that France is no gainer by the wars of Napoleon. Then add to the loss, the misery he occasioned in the countries he invaded, and what shall we say of that destroyer? Was he not truly "the scourge of God," and the greatest *curse* Europe ever endured in one man?

We will now, sir, come nearer home. In the late war with Great Britain, we have probably lost a hundred fold more lives than have ever been lost by duelling in our country, since its first settlement. And, pray sir, have not these lives been lost "without any service to their country," except such *honor* as a duellist acquires by fighting bravely, after he has given a challenge? But is this honor an equivalent for the loss of thirty thousand of our countrymen, and the destruction of as many more on the part of Great Britain? Does this honor heal the breaches made in thirty thousand families? Does it dry up the tears of mourning parents, widows, and orphans? Does it cancel the debts contracted by the war, and relieve the people from the burden of *taxes*? Does it place the thousands in comfortable circumstances, who were made bankrupts by the war? Does it insure the bliss of heaven to those who have died in battle?

One question more in this connexion. Would your excellency have given your *own life* to have secured to the nation every benefit that has been obtained by the war? If not, at what rate do you value the lives of those who have perished, if you say the war has been a benefit to the nation?

Yet, sir, I will not say, that no benefits are likely to result from the war. As the war between Hamilton and Burr was

the occasion of exciting abhorrence to the custom of duelling; so I believe the late war will serve to open many eyes, and be the occasion of bringing this "needless, inhuman custom" into disrepute. Some farther remarks may be expected in future letters.

In the mean time, I am, &c.

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## LETTER II.

SIR,

You think the custom of duelling is so far from being honorable, that by complying with it, men do not "rise above the most petulant and ferocious animals," and that they "fall far below the magnanimity of the mastiff." This perfectly corresponds with my views of the conduct of rulers in making war. You will then permit me to ask, Should not the rulers of a nation display as much magnanimity as you wish to see in military officers and private gentlemen? Ought they not to equal the mastiff in magnanimity? Shall we then censure the duellist for a private combat, and justify a ruler in plunging a whole nation into the miseries of war?

You speak of the *honor* of a nation as of vast importance. I admit that it is so; but in what does the honor of a nation consist? Does it consist in being *quick to resent* and *brave to fight*? If honor be composed of such ingredients, why do you disown duelling? Why do you not rather wish the whole nation to be trained up to that mode of displaying valor? A nation educated as duellists, would unquestionably be quick to resent and brave in battle.

But, sir, does not the honor of a nation result from the display of intelligence, prudence, integrity, justice, benevolence, magnanimity, forbearance, prosperity, and happiness? Let these ingredients of national character be displayed before the world, and the revengeful, fighting character will soon be abhorred.

If such things as I have named be the principal things which render a nation truly honorable, is it not manifestly as false a notion of honor which hurries a nation to make war, as that which disposes a duellist to give a challenge? And is

not making war, in effect, making a sacrifice of almost every thing which properly belongs to national honor? Are the rulers of a nation acting an honorable part, while manuring the earth with the blood of its inhabitants? Yea, with innocent blood? Is it truly honorable for them to offer human sacrifices to their own ambition, or to the savage phantom, called honor? Is it honorable for rulers to corrupt the morals of community, and fill their country with poverty, distress, lamentation, and woe? If this be honorable, what could be dishonorable?

You justly object to duelling, that it is of a demoralizing tendency. I object the same to war; and I may boldly affirm, that in this respect, it is far worse than duelling.

You think duellists ought to consider what would be the consequences, if all the people of other classes should imitate their example in making light of human life. But are duellists more chargeable with making light of human life, than rulers who make war? You can be at no loss for the proper answer to this question.

"If duellists were not deluded by the reasoning of their passions," you think "they would see that all other classes of community have as good a right as they have, to adopt a murderous mode of deciding controversies." This was well said, and it may with propriety be repeated, with only changing the word *duellists* for *rulers*—"If *rulers* were not deluded by the reasoning of their passions they would see, that every other class of citizens have as good a right as they have, to adopt a murderous mode of deciding controversies."

If we take a moral view of the subject, and examine it apart from passion, prejudice, and custom, it will not be easy to see, why a murderous mode of deciding controversies would be more criminal in any other case, than in the contentions of rulers of different nations. Why may not different towns in the same state, or different families in the same town, or two individuals of the same family, follow the example of their rulers in this particular? Only let a custom become popular in either of the other cases, and it will puzzle a Jesuit to tell, why it is more immoral, or more inhuman, or more offensive to God, than for the rulers of nations to adopt the same mode.

It may indeed be said, that in civilized communities the laws provide for the settlement of controversies between towns, families and individuals, so as to preclude the necessity of an appeal to arms. This is true; but it is equally true, that the laws of reason and religion provide for the settlement of disputes between nations. Will you plead that these laws do not insure that a nation shall, in all cases, obtain its rights without an appeal to arms? The same, sir, is true of civil laws in relation to the other cases. May I not safely add, that of all modes for obtaining rights, which were ever invented by men, there is not one more uncertain, than that of war? To decide a question of right by lot, or the cast of a die, would be as sure of doing justice, as a decision by war, and infinitely less expensive, and more honorable.

It is easy to see, that if it should become fashionable for towns and families to settle their disputes by war; force, and violence, and fraud, and skill in the use of arms, would become a substitute for reason and justice, and be made the standard of right and wrong. No certainty could exist that right would be obtained, or wrongs redressed, by such decisions. It would, however, be very certain, that wrongs would be multiplied without number, and that the weak and the innocent would fall a prey to violence and injustice. But as awful as it may be to think of, every particular in this description is strictly true, when applied to wars between nations, as a mode of deciding controversies, or of obtaining rights.

In truth, sir, I am not acquainted with any species of violence, or fraud, or injustice, or robbery, or piracy, by which the laws of rectitude are more wantonly violated, than they are by the usages of war. If the laws of rectitude and the rights of humanity are not violated by the custom and usages of war, then robbers, pirates and murderers may safely plead, "*not guilty.*" For what species of violence or villany is committed by these hardened wretches, which is not *authorized* by rulers in making war? Killing the innocent, and violently taking or destroying property, are in fact the employments *appointed* for military men by war-making rulers.

Your excellency observed, that duellists would "use their influence to have people of other classes *hanged* for imitating their own example, in adopting a murderous mode of deciding controversies." May not this remark be emphatically applied to rulers who make war? Do they not cause private citizens to be hanged for deciding quarrels by slaughter and violence? And yet, is not this the mode in which they decide their own quarrels? While they authorize and justify the violent slaughter of the innocent, in their own disputes with the rulers of other nations, they will punish with death similar acts of violence in the private quarrels of their subjects or fellow citizens!

"To see" rulers "thus trifle with human life," in their own quarrels, "must naturally have considerable effect on the other classes of community." To this influence, sir, in my opinion, is to be ascribed the far greater part of all the private murders and robberies which take place in the world. Men who are trained up to robbery and murder by the custom of war, may be expected to *follow their trade*, and not always to wait for the word of command from those in authority. It requires more skill in the science of *jesuitism*, than such men generally possess, to see why it is more criminal for them to kill in their *own* quarrels, than to do the same acts in the quarrels of their rulers; or to see why they may not rob and plunder the innocent for their own benefit, with the same propriety as to rob and plunder for the benefit of others. When, therefore, by the custom of war, men have become hardened in vice, inured to crime, and habituated to acts of public authorized butchery and robbery; can it be wonderful if their own wants and inclinations should lead them sometimes to commit similar acts in a more private and unauthorized manner? Indeed, sir, when it shall be duly considered, how much is done by the custom of war, to corrupt the morals of community, and how many men are trained up to bloody and desperate enterprizes; the greater wonder will be, that private robberies and murders are not ten times more frequent than they are now known to be in the world. It is, however, to be observed, that men who are accustomed to the violence of war and to

military discipline, very well know, that rulers will applaud acts of violence and inhumanity in one case, and punish them with death in another ; and that there is no safety in robbing and murdering, except when it is done in *obedience to the orders of government.*

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### LETTER III.

SIR,

WITH great propriety your excellency observed of duelling, that “ popularity is the only element in which such a murderous custom can thrive, or even live, among men of reflection ;” and that “ only let the custom become disreputable, and it will wither away like a weed pulled up by the roots, and exposed to the heat of the sun.”

The very same, sir, may be as truly affirmed of the more destructive custom of war. It is popularity which keeps this custom alive; it is this which produces the barbarous enthusiasm, to revenge, and to destroy. Let war become disreputable, let an enthusiasm to save the lives of men be excited, and the custom will soon be abhorred, as “ a privileged mode of murder,” under which rulers have assumed the right of exposing the lives of their own subjects, and of slaughtering the subjects of another nation.

Suppose, sir, that prior to the late war, the people of this country had viewed the custom of war with the same abhorrence that you now do the custom of duelling : Would the war have been declared ? Or had it been declared under such circumstances, would not you and some others have known, before this time, as well as I do, what it is to be dismissed from office, for being concerned in “ a needless and inhuman custom.”

Without any ill will towards your excellency, or any other man in office, I may state another question : Would it not “ give a check to the custom” of war, if the people of every nation should adopt your summary mode, and dismiss from office every man who shows a disposition to involve his country in the miseries of war ? The Prince Regent of Great Brit-

ain and the President of the United States, have adopted a very laudable method to check duelling. Let the people of the two nations so far imitate the examples of their chief magistrates, as to resolve, that henceforth no person shall be continued in any office of honor or profit, who shall appear as an instigator of war. Then war and duelling will be placed, as they ought to be, on similar ground ; and both, I hope, " will wither away like weeds pulled up by the roots, and exposed to the heat of the sun."

You proposed the formation of societies to discuss the subject of duelling, and to employ their influence to effect a revolution in the opinions of those who favor the custom as honorable. In this proposal I cordially acquiesced. I may now in my turn propose the formation of societies, to discuss the subject of war, and to attempt a revolution in the opinions of those who favor this custom. As a thousand lives are sacrificed by war, to one by duelling, there seems to be a thousand fold stronger inducements in the former case, than in the latter. As I said of duelling I may say of war, " the more it is examined, the more it will be abhorred."

Should peace societies be formed, several points will demand their attention.

In the first place, it will behove them to investigate some mode for effecting a reformation in the manner of conducting newspapers—some mode which shall make it for the interest of editors to exclude from their papers every thing of a vindictive and inflammatory character ; and to give the preference to such things, as are of a pacific, friendly, and uniting tendency.

No species of publication has more influence on the state and morals of society than newspapers, and none which should be conducted with more care, and with purer motives. It is principally by inflammatory and libellous publications, that society is agitated, enmity excited, and a disposition for war produced. Free and candid discussions should be encouraged, but such things as tend to inflame the minds of people with enmity, or a war spirit, should be discountenanced by every virtuous member of society. For when the passions of a com-

munity are inflamed, reason has lost its control, and such measures will naturally be adopted as passion shall dictate ; and these are commonly such as involve deplorable calamities. Let newspapers be made the vehicles of correct information and pacific sentiments, and the thirst for blood will abate, and the custom of war will lose its popularity. I might say more on this point, but your own reflections will supply many defects.

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#### LETTER IV.

SIR,

I HAVE already hinted at one thing, which would demand the attention of peace societies, should such be formed. I shall now observe, that it would also behove them to inquire, whether the most fatal delusions do not exist respecting *national honor, true patriotism, and the right or power of rulers to make war.*

By what I have already said, your excellency has an idea of my views of national honor. I may however add a few thoughts on this point.

The opinion which has been entertained of *valor, or bravery in battle*, as an *honorable virtue*, was evidently borrowed from the pagans, and not from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Fortitude to *suffer wrong*, and to meet even death itself in the path of obedience to God, rather than to *do wrong, to avenge ourselves, or to render evil for evil*, is the valor recommended by the precepts and the example of the Prince of Peace. This is a virtue, opposite in its nature and tendency to that vindictive valor, so much extolled by pagans and mohometans, and by such christians as prefer pagan morality to that inculcated by the gospel.

The followers of Jesus were to resemble the harmless sheep and lambs, and not wolves and tigers. But many who have professed to be christians, have gloried in a resemblance to ferocious animals. Nor have they been contented with equaling the wolf and the tiger, in a blood thirsty disposition. They have far surpassed them. The wolf and the tiger are generally contented with devouring animals of different species from

their own ; and these they attack, not so much to acquire honor by bravery in battle, as to procure something to satisfy their hunger, and to feed their young. It is believed they have seldom been known to exult in the premeditated slaughter of hundreds of their own species.

But men, yea, men calling themselves christians, are not contented with butchering innumerable other tribes of animals, for food, clothing, and other uses, but they even make what they regard as an *honorable trade, a professional employmen*t, of *killi*ng one another. This conduct is believed to be peculiar to the human race, and to have no parallel in the history of other beings, in heaven, on earth, nor even in hell. Men glory in their dignity above the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea ; but whether their making a trade of destroying one another, is to be regarded as an excellence, as something which contributes to the honor of our race, let conscience and common sense determine. If it be not an honorable distinction between us and other tribes of creation, it is unquestionably something which deserves the abhorrence of every intelligent being.

In our estimation of wild animals, we most abhor those which are most fierce and blood thirsty ; yet we extol that in men, as an honorable virtue, which renders other beings objects of our abhorrence. We cannot see a hawk kill a chicken, nor a wolf kill a lamb, without feelings of commiseration for the sufferer, and feelings of indignation or detestation against the destroyer. Yet we can extol as a *virtue* the obdurate, unrelenting, revengeful, and ferocious bravery, with which men can butcher one another in war.

If satan had been appointed or permitted to dictate to christians what they should regard as honorable virtue and national honor, could he have suited himself better, than by proposing the very things, which are now so popular in christian nations ? Could he have invented any thing, which would have insured more slaughter of mankind by the hands of each other ?

If in the view of God, men are to be regarded as *virtuous*, because they have arrived to such a pitch of hardness, inhumanity, and ferocity, that they can bravely slaughter one another ;

and if, in his view, the *honor* of a nation may be raised, by a display of this kind of virtue ; then as soon as these things shall be satisfactorily proved, we may be certain, that Jesus was an impostor, and that Mahomet had higher claims to be regarded as a teacher sent from God. But at the same time another conclusion will force itself on the mind, in respect to the moral character of Jehovah, which is too horrid to be expressed.

## LETTER V.

SIR,

PATRIOTISM is another thing which requires examination. Like the delusive terms, "Liberty and equality," as used in the French revolution, and often with a view to cover the basest designs ; so the word *patriotism* is frequently in the mouths of vindictive war-makers, as a charm, to hurry men to destruction. As patriotism means "love of one's own country," we surely ought to understand by it, love to the lives, the privileges, the virtue, the peace, the prosperity, and the happiness of the community of which we are members.

But as valor and skill in the work of human butchery, are now regarded as the *cardinal virtues*—and as the *honor* of a nation is supposed to be exalted by a display of such virtues; so patriotism is made to consist in an enthusiasm to support government, in making and carrying on a war, which gives opportunity for the display of the wonderful virtues, and to exalt the glory of a nation.

One man ardently wishes to preserve his countrymen from the miseries of war, and from the folly and madness of sacrificing their lives to the pagan idol *honor*—and would sooner lay down his own life to preserve the peace of his country, than be an instrument of involving it in the sins and calamities of war—He is considered as no patriot, but rather as an enemy to his country.

But another man loves his country *so well*, that he is willing to sacrifice fifty or a hundred thousand of his fellow citizens in war, rather than to endure any insult or injury from a foreign power—Here is patriotism, which will raise a man to the skies ! No language is sufficient to express his praise ! But if

this may be called patriotism, it is patriotism with a vengeance against the best interests of his own country—a patriotism which calls evil good and good evil, and which is *murderous* in proportion as it is *ardent*.

Such love of country is like the love of the papists for the pagans, whom they converted with the sword, killing off one part of a nation, and subjecting those to slavery who chose to be *baptized* rather than *slain*. While these *lovers* of the pagans pretended to bless them with the gospel of salvation, they either deprived them of life, or of the blessings which render life desirable. In a similar manner, the popular patriotism blesses a nation with the honor of being brave to fight, but it is at the expense of killing off a large number of the citizens, and subjecting the survivors to poverty, taxation, mourning, and woe; and not unfrequently to the chains of despotism.

My mind has been so engrossed with my subject, that I had almost forgotten that I was addressing your Excellency; but your candor will excuse such inattentions as may have resulted from an enthusiasm to save the lives of men, and to preserve my country from another war. My present views of patriotism were not cast in the popular mould; but I think, should they prevail, they will be found conducive to the tranquillity and happiness of mankind; and this is an object worthy to be sought with ardor. Should you doubt the correctness of my views of patriotism, I wish you to compare them with the patriotism of the Savior of men. At present I feel disposed to regard **HIM** as my pattern, rather than those I formerly followed. However much he might have been insulted, he would not, I think, have *fought a duel*, to vindicate his honor; yet few persons have displayed more intrepidity of character, than appeared in him. Nor do I think he would have advised a ruler to plunge his nation into the horrid abyss of war, that its *virtue* might be displayed, and its *honor* advanced by bravely slaughtering the innocent people of another country. And is it not a circumstance worthy of some notice, that in pronouncing his benedictions, on virtuous characters, such as the “merciful,” the “peace makers,” &c. he omitted to say—“*Blessed are the war makers; for they shall be called true patriots.*” This omission has impressed my mind with a belief,

that the common encomiums on fighting men, are not very sure passports to the joys of heaven, nor much to be relied on as recommendations to divine favor.

In my next, I intend to give a brief illustration of the mistakes relating to national honor, virtue, and patriotism.

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## LETTER VI.

SIR,

In my last, I promised an illustration. You will recollect the allusion you made in our interview, to the custom of our ancestors in putting men to death for a dissent from the majority in religious opinions. That custom will favor us with a striking illustration of the points before us, and of the fatal consequences which result from false notions of *honor*, *virtue*, and *patriotism*.

In former ages, when the custom prevailed to which you alluded, it was supposed that the *honor* of the Christian church required, that dissenters from the orthodox faith should be put to death; and that by such sacrifices the *purity* of the church was preserved, and its *honor* secured and advanced. Having imbibed this false principle respecting the honor of the church, our ancestors were very naturally led to another most dreadful mistake—namely, that a flaming zeal to destroy supposed heretics, was love to the honor and best interests of Christ and his kingdom. By these two false principles, the peace and happiness of the church were in a great measure destroyed, and millions of lives were sacrificed.

Your excellency will agree with me, that the honor of a Christian church results from the display of mutual love, fidelity, forbearance, and kindness among its members, in conformity to the commands of their Lord and Savior; and not from making such havoc of each other's lives, on account of some differences in opinion. You will also agree with me, that those ancient Christians were under an awful mistake, in supposing that their *burning zeal* for the slaughter of dissenting brethren, was any thing of the nature of that *love*, which Jesus required of his followers, and which he himself exemplified.

I may now appeal to the good sense of your excellency, and ask, Were these ancient mistakes respecting the honor of the church, and love to its best interest, any greater than the mistakes which then prevailed, and which still prevail, respecting the honor of a nation and love of country? And have not the latter mistakes occasioned a hundred fold more desolation and misery than the former?

Is it not, sir, a fact, that in every sanguinary custom, which was ever popular among men, some false notion of *honor* has been established, with corresponding ideas of *virtue*? Is not this as strictly true of every other sanguinary custom, as of duelling, and burning men for their religious opinions? I believe sir, that on reflection, you will be convinced, that such is the truth of facts; and that most of those who have ridiculed the fanaticism of papists and protestants of former ages, are themselves as really fanatics in regard to the custom of war, the honor of a nation, the virtue of fighting bravely, and love of country. The custom of war is supported by a fanaticism *as black* and *as bloody*, as any that can be named. You will remember who said, "As to *fanatics*, I am not acquainted with any persons more deserving of that name, than those who will wantonly sacrifice their own lives and the lives of others, to false principles of honor, without any prospect of advantage to themselves, their families, or their country :" Nor is it possible for you to deny that more human lives have been thus wantonly sacrificed in war, than by every other species of fanaticism, that ever existed on the face of the earth.

For a long period of time, the papal clergy claimed the right of condemning men to suffer death, who happened to dissent from their creed. This conduct, I presume, you disapprove; and you probably wonder how clergymen could be so deluded, as to imagine they had any such right; and how other classes of people could be prevailed on to submit to such daring usurpation, over the consciences and lives of men. But there are questions, which every protestant ruler may well address to his own conscience:—What right have I to entice, or to compel, those under my government, to arm themselves with weapons of death, and enter the ranks of an army, for the

purpose of slaughtering the unoffending subjects of a foreign government? Is not the power I assume over the lives of men, as positively unjust and inhuman, as the power assumed by the papal clergy? And is it not wonderful, that any intelligent community can be so deluded, as to think I have of right any such power?

This subject, sir, I could pursue, had I leisure for the purpose; but to save some labor to myself, and still do what I can in this all important cause, I shall enclose with this, a copy of a "Review of the power assumed by rulers, over the lives of men and the laws of God, in making war." This review was written by a person, with whom I have some acquaintance; but, I believe, without any expectation that it would ever fall into your hands. I am, however, permitted to send it to you, on this condition, that you should be informed, that the writer intended the piece as a *general review* of the subject, without any particular application to the rulers of one nation rather than another; and that it is far from his wish, to excite enmity against the rulers of his own nation. While he thinks they have erred, he wishes them well, and hopes they never will err in like manner again.

Your excellency will perceive that the sentiments of the Review, at least many of them, accord with those I have had the pleasure of communicating. If the author is correct on the point he has discussed, as I prevailingly think he is, there is an alarming error in the world on that subject, and a tremendous retribution awaits those who assume the power of *making war*! But your excellency professed a desire to know the truth, and a determination to read with candor, and to judge impartially. This must be my apology, if I need any, for the freedom I have indulged in my letters, and for sending the Review. With sincere desires for your happiness, and a hope that your last days may be your best,

I am, sir, sincerely yours,

OMAR.

**A REVIEW OF THE POWER ASSUMED BY RULERS OVER THE LAWS OF GOD, AND THE LIVES OF MEN.**

THE remarks now to be made, will not be designed to diminish the respect which is due to the rulers of nations. Rulers are but men, and like other men, they are liable to be so misled by passion, prejudice, and custom, as to call evil good, and good evil. To convince, and not to offend, is the object in view.

That every one may have opportunity to judge of the power assumed by rulers, a plain case will be stated, which has often occurred :—

The dominions of two governments are separated only by a geographical line. Numerous settlements are made adjacent to the line on each side ; and the people of the two states live together as neighbors, friends, and brothers. They often meet in the same house for worship, become members of the same church ; intermarriages are frequent ; the sons on one side purchase lands and settle on the other ; and in a multitude of ways they become united, endeared, and attached to each other.

In time of peace, if a vicious person on one side steals on the other, and is detected, he is punished as a thief ; if he maliciously kills, he is hanged as a murderer ; and all acts of violence are regarded as criminal. Such is the state of things during peace.

The next news is, a dispute has arisen between the two governments. An ambassador has been insulted, or a question of property, or a boundary line has occurred. The dispute is managed in a haughty, menacing tone on one side, and thus retorted on the other. Next out comes a flaming manifesto, or declaration of war. The peaceful inhabitants, on the different sides of the line, are declared to be enemies to each other ; they are required to take up arms, and meet each other in the field of battle ; neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, and father against son. All the means which malice can suggest, or ingenuity invent, are adopted, to inflame their passions, alienate their hearts, excite their enmity,

and make them forget that they are friends and brethren. They must fight, or be punished as traitors or cowards. They must kill or be killed, and perhaps both.

Now the laws of God are superseded by the declaration of war—theft is no longer stealing, nor killing murder. Nay, it is now declared to be just and honorable, to plunder and to kill; and he who proves to be the most hardened and successful villain, acquires the greatest share of renown. After the parties have spread for years mutual havoc and desolation through the villages, the sound of peace is heard by those who happen to be alive. The neighbors are required to cease from slaughter; and killing again becomes murder, by the mere mandate of a ruler.

Now we may boldly and solemnly ask, who gave these rulers power to suspend the laws of God, during the war, and thus to sacrifice the lives of men? Who gave them a right to change the relations of these citizens from friends and neighbors to political enemies? Who authorized the rulers to inflame their subjects with enmity, and to arm them for mutual havoc and murder?

Must not that ruler be the subject of strong delusions, or the most perfect insanity, who can suppose that a mandate from himself can dissolve the obligations which men are under to love one another, or absolve them from guilt in shedding innocent blood? Can rational beings be so infatuated by a popular custom, as to suppose, that the mere word of a fallible, and perhaps ungodly ruler, is of sufficient force to annihilate or suspend the laws and authority of God; so as to render that honorable virtue to day, which yesterday would have been wanton cruelty, and deliberate murder? And that too without any change in the character or condition of the subjects, but what the ruler himself has made!

When I reflect on the power thus assumed by rulers, I find it so perfectly correspondent with Paul's account of "the man of sin," that I have sometimes suspected that he, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped," is the spirit and custom of war personified, or the professed Christian ruler supporting this diabolical and an-

tichristian custom. What more power could a war-maker assume, if he imagined himself to be "exalted above all that is called God?" Does he not assume the prerogatives of the Almighty, and even fancy that he can at pleasure, suspend or annul the authority of Jehovah? Does he not imagine that he can authorize and render just and honorable, the vilest passions and most horrid deeds? Passions and deeds which the ruler himself would regard as deserving of death, are justified and applauded, because he has interposed a bloody mandate between the peaceful laws of heaven and his deluded subjects. If this be not exalting himself "above all that is called God," it will be difficult to find any thing on this side the infernal regions, to which this description will apply. And it may be doubted, whether there be any thing even there, more abominable, more repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, than those things which are authorized by the custom of war.

In answer to the question, 'Whence did rulers derive this enormous power?' some will answer, 'Under republican governments, they derive it from the people and the constitution!' Had the people then such power to delegate? Or did they exalt themselves above all that is called God, in pretending to confer such power? Prior to this delegation of power, had *they* a right wantonly to sacrifice their own lives, or the lives of others? Could *they* at pleasure suspend the law of God during an attempt to kill a brother, or one of God's children? Could *they* thus easily change vice into virtue, and the most daring crimes into feats of honor? Could *they* render justifiable the most murderous passions, as a substitute for that love which God has enjoined? If they had no such rights or powers to delegate, it is folly or madness in rulers to imagine that they possess any such thing! What manifest delusion is this, to suppose that subjects may confer on rulers power sufficient to suspend the laws of heaven!

Either rulers have such power, or they have not. If they possess this power, then killing the innocent during war, and in obedience to the order of the ruler, is not murder. But if they have *not* power to supersede the commands, "thou shalt not kill"—"thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," then these

acts of killing, and every murderous passion must be condemned at the bar of God.

All protestant rulers would deride the pretensions of the Roman pontiff, who claims power to absolve from guilt, and to grant indulgences to sin ; or they would pity the man thus grossly deluded. But in what respects do the pretensions of the pontiff exceed those of the war making ruler ? In what particular are they more ridiculous, more arrogant, or more heaven daring ? Political jesuits alone can tell. If men are liable to be punished for their evil deeds, notwithstanding the license or the absolution of the pontiff, so they are, notwithstanding the arrogant pretensions of war-makers.

To support the sanguinary custom of war, rulers are obliged to adopt sanguinary laws, which expose the lives of their own citizens. Cowardice in an officer, exposes him to death. Here a capital crime is made out of a mere natural infirmity, and one, perhaps, which it was utterly impossible for the officer to surmount. Desertion also is punished with death, even on the part of the aggressor in war. Whether the soldier deserted in consequence of ill usage, abuse from his officers, conscientious scruples in regard to the justice of the cause, or for no reason at all, still he is liable to be shot.

To complete the inconsistency, while the aggressor in the war will punish with death desertion from his own army, he will bribe or entice the soldiers of the opposing army, to commit the same crime.

That such conduct may be consistent with the usages of war, we do not deny ; but the propriety of it we may deny with confidence. If desertion from the aggressor deserves death, it cannot deserve less on the other side. If it do not deserve death, the ruler who inflicts the punishment is guilty of unjustly taking human life. If he views the crime as deserving of death, and still will entice others to commit it, what is he but a deluded or an unprincipled mortal ?

Similar to this is the custom of employing and punishing spies. Each army will employ spies. And yet if a spy from one army is detected by the other, death is his portion. Now it is a question, which God will decide, whether that ruler who

will both employ a spy, and punish a spy with death, is not chargeable with blood guiltiness, and the most glaring inconsistency.

But the custom of war is itself such a flagrant outrage of the principles of reason, justice, religion, and humanity, that it is impossible to support it at all, but by setting aside the laws of God, and adopting rules and maxims of conduct, subversive of his requirements; and by authorizing the very crimes which he has forbidden. Deceit, fraud, and falsehood—theft, robbery, and murder, and every species of impiety and injustice, which God forbids, are authorized by the maxims and usages of war. That love and kindness, which God requires, the custom of war prohibits; and that hatred, violence, and revenge, which God forbids, the custom of war requires.

Unless the laws of nations, the maxims of war, and the authority of rulers, are sufficient to subvert the authority of God, and change vice into virtue, the custom of war must involve the most awful retributions. For it is manifest that both rulers and subjects, do act on the presumption, that a declaration of war can authorize the most flagrant violations of the moral law, and the benevolent precepts of the gospel; and that a state of war changes the character of moral actions, so that vice becomes virtue, and virtue vice.

Which of the ten commandments, or of the precepts of the gospel, is not supposed to be, at least, partially suspended during war? Do not men have other gods before Jehovah, while they serve and obey men in defiance of God's commands? Do not war makers impiously take God's name in vain, and make him a party or an associate in their guilty and murderous enterprizes? Is not the fourth command uniformly and wantonly violated during war? Are not children authorized so far to dishonor father and mother, as even to take their lives, if they happen to be opposed to each other in the contest? As to the four following commands, the maxims and usages of war run thus:—Thou *shalt* kill. Thou *mayest* commit adultery and fornication. Thou *mayest* steal, rob, and plunder. Thou *mayest* bear false witness, slander, deceive, and lie. Thou *mayest* covet thy neighbor's house, his wife, his

man servant, his maid servant, his ox, his ass, and *every thing that is his.*

In the same licentious manner, the custom and maxims of war subvert or reverse the benevolent and peaceful precepts of Jesus, and authorize every passion and every vice, prohibited by the gospel. What then is more deserving of the character of the "man of sin," or of *antichrist*, than the spirit and custom of war? And have we no reason to fear, that the judicial threatening, "God shall send them strong delusions that they may believe a lie," has been awfully verified among professed Christians, who have had pleasure in this unrighteous custom? Can there be stronger delusions, than those by which men are made to believe, that they are acting in a manner which God will approve, while they support a custom which sets at defiance every precept of his law and his gospel!

We are amazed at the power of delusion in the religious fanatics of Munster, who, fancying themselves to be the favorites of heaven, claimed as their privilege the indulgence of every licentious passion, and the right of slaughtering their fellow men, that they might inherit the earth. But what excesses, what inconsistencies, what enormities can be charged to their account, which have not been equalled or surpassed by war makers in every age! The deluded king of these madmen assumed no more power over the lives of men and the laws of God, than has been commonly assumed by war making rulers.

We regard the Algerines as barbarians, pirates, robbers, and murderers; because their modes of warfare are in some respects different from those adopted by Christian nations. But these barbarians have their customs as well as other people; and they can plead that their inhuman practices are not only authorized by their *rulers*, but by their *religion*. Their rulers have as good a right to authorize their barbarous conduct, as Christian rulers have to authorize the most bare faced violations of the laws of God and the precepts of the gospel. If a Christian ruler can, by a war mandate, render violence and murder justifiable, why may not the Dey of Algiers convert the most cruel slavery into a justifiable means of obtaining money?

Their mode of warfare is indeed abominable inhumanity ; but this is true of the modes authorized by christian rulers.

We reprobate the customs of the Indians, in torturing captives, and scalping the dead. But these are Indian customs, and according to their maxims of war ; nor are they more savage, than the indiscriminate butchery of men, women, and children, which has often been authorized by *pretended* christian rulers, on taking a city by storm. In truth, we can find no custom among the most savage nations, or the most deluded fanatics, which may not be vindicated with as good a grace, as the custom of christian rulers in making war. If christian rulers will so far agree with the Indian chiefs, as to authorize the murder of the innocent, let them not reproach the Indians for the far less unjust and inhuman practice of taking the scalps of the dead. To take life from the innocent and the living, is a very serious injury ; but to take the scalp from a dead man, does him no harm at all. It is only an Indian mode of glorying in victory ; and perhaps as little offensive to God, as the modes often adopted by Christians. On the whole, christian rulers should either admit that the established customs of the Algerines and the Indians, are as justifiable as their own, and cease to reproach them for their inhumanity, or begin a reformation at home.

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### OMAR'S SOLITARY REFLECTIONS.

#### SECTION I.

I HAVE now done writing to the President. What effect my letters may have on his mind, I know not. I hope they will give no offence, for surely none has been intended. He sees the error of duellists, but I fear he will not be easily persuaded to renounce an error, which has been sanctioned by his own administration. He is, however, certainly a man of talents, and capable of examining the subject. I cannot but indulge some hope of success.

But alas ! how can I hope to convince a *statesman* that war is a wicked custom, while so great a portion of the *clergy*

are its advocates ! It is surely to be lamented that ever a minister of the gospel was known to approve a custom, which involves every species of guilt which God forbids ; and which cannot possibly exist but by the indulgence of a temper, directly opposed to the temper of Jesus.

While different sects of christians have adopted different criterions of the christian character, and pursued a course of exclusive conduct towards each other ; how seldom has the benevolent and self-denying temper of the gospel been admitted as the best evidence of true religion ! And how unanimous have been most sects of christians in supporting a custom of violence and revenge, by which many thousands of lives are annually sacrificed to the ambition of rulers ! Shocking indeed is the thought, but so it seems to have been, that on *no one point* have christians been *more united* than in supporting the very *worst custom in the pagan world* !

But why do I wonder at others ? I too was educated under the light of the gospel, except so far as this light was eclipsed by antichristian opinions and customs. Yet how long did I remain in darkness, bewildered by popular delusions !

O my God, cleanse my soul from all the guilt I contracted by supporting sanguinary customs. Dispose me to be as ready to forgive as I am desirous to be forgiven—as cheerful to obey the precepts of thy Son, as I am to be saved by thy grace through him.

#### SECTION II.

Let me pause a moment. —My letters are gone out of my hands, and possibly they will be published to the world. How then shall I retain my standing in the church ? Shall I not be censured for departing from the faith and practice of our ancestors ?

I have however done what I thought to be my duty ; and with God I leave the event. While I was a *fighting christian*, my character was supposed to stand fair, although my heart and my hands were defiled with blood. Now i have renounced the fighting character and become a penitent for the blood I have shed, some will probably reproach me as an apostate

from the religion of Jesus. But I have no reason to fear worse treatment than he received ; and surely I do not deserve better than he deserved, who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

There is such a perfect contrast between the maxims of the gospel and the maxims of war, that I feel amazed and confounded, when I reflect that for ages the great body of the clergy have justified the most sanguinary custom that ever existed among men.—How would the compassionate Savior have appeared at the head of an army, pronouncing a violent philippic, to excite men to revenge and havoc ? Or how would he have appeared as a chaplain, praying to his Father to grant success to an army about to engage in the work of vengeance and murder ! How opposite this, to the spirit of his command : " Love your enemies ;" and to his prayer on the cross : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Whoever may have been in the right, or in the wrong, in the theological controversies of the present age, how *harmless* have been most of the errors which have been combatted, compared with that enormous practical error, which has been common to all the contending parties ? I can hardly think of any error, short of absolute atheism, which appears to me more repugnant to the gospel, or more dangerous to the souls of men, than this popular belief, that christians may, in obedience to the gospel, or as followers of Jesus, meet each other in the field of battle for mutual violence and slaughter—and that prior to entering on this dreadful work they may, on each side, cry to the *Father of mercies* to grant them success in their attempts to butcher one another. Yet this monstrous, murderous error, like the "*camel*" of the Pharisees, has been swallowed by almost every sect of christians ; and that too, while each has been careful to "strain out" some "*gnat*," infinitely less dangerous to the lives, and to the souls of men.

We have indeed many melancholy proofs of the moral blindness and depravity of mankind ; but the *popularity of war* among christians, who have the gospel in their hands, crowns the whole, and leaves no room for doubt. " Their feet are

swift to shed blood : Destruction and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace have they not known."

What errors may not christians embrace and support from an improper regard to the traditions they have received from their forefathers ! Had the custom of war never been adopted among christians of former ages—had our ancestors kept themselves pure from shedding innocent blood—and expressed a proper abhorrence of war, as it existed among pagans ; what horror would the people of this country have now felt, at the bare proposal of settling a national controversy, by an appeal to arms ! The thought of settling a parish dispute in the same manner, would not have appeared so shocking and dreadful.

But as the custom of war has been so long popular among christians, and among our ancestors, many perhaps will be more shocked to hear its justice and morality denied, than they would be to hear of the slaughter of a hundred thousand fellow beings, in a battle *bravely fought.*

### SECTION III.

It is a common maxim, that "*misery loves company,*" and perhaps it is not less so with *error* and *vice*. When persons become convinced that they have been in a popular error, they are too apt to be pleased with the thought, that they have not been alone in the business ; that men of all ranks have been equally deluded. This consideration may have influence with many, to prevent a thorough inquiry, after the morality of a popular custom is called in question. On the same ground some may feel justified in neglecting to exert themselves to open the eyes of others, when they have become fully convinced that a custom is of a dangerous character. But it ought ever to be considered, that the more popular any vicious custom is, the more dreadful are its effects ; and therefore the more thorough should be our inquiries and our exertions.— "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished."

Suppose I had discovered to my satisfaction, that a pretended remedy for the most dangerous disease had obtained cir-

culation ; that this supposed catholicon had destroyed thousands in past ages ; and that by a popular recommendation, people of all ranks in this country had been seduced to purchase the fatal poison ; what would be my duty ? Might I feel easy and hold my peace, because the error was so common, that people of every class were exposed to be destroyed ? Common sense and humanity unite in saying, The more there are exposed, the more thorough and vigorous should be the efforts to save the lives of men.

It may indeed be less reproachful to be in a popular error, than in one which is unpopular ; but it is not less dangerous. The more popular a malignant custom is, the more likely people are to be deluded by it to their own destruction. If duelling were as popular as war, it would probably destroy as many lives.

Therefore, as I feel the most perfect conviction, that war is as murderous as duelling, or even as assassination—that millions of men have already been wantonly sacrificed by it—and that millions more are in danger of losing both their lives and their souls ; it must be my duty to do what I can, to convince others of their danger, “whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.” As in the case of discovering a popular poison, I should be chargeable with inhumanity, and with the blood of my fellow men, if I should refuse to give information and warning ; so it must be in the present case. If I must lose my character and my life by any voluntary effort, let it be in an attempt to save my fellow men, and not in an attempt to destroy them. “ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” But—“ whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer ; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”

If by any means there might be produced in our country as much zeal and exertion to preserve the blessing of peace, as we have seen in favor of war, how happy would be our prospects ! If a tenth part of as much property, as has been expended and destroyed in the late war, should be judiciously appropriated in Great Britain and the United States, in cultivating the spirit of peace, and exciting an abhorrence of war,

the present tranquillity between the two nations would probably be as durable as their existence. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" but how horrid to see them inflamed with hatred, and murdering one another, under the delusive idea that such is the road to glory, and to heaven!

I cannot but feel tenderly for my former military companions. I know very well their love of glory; and should war become disreputable, they will be ready to exclaim, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more!" They will, however, probably derive some support from this melancholy fact, that if the past popularity of war has been a delusion, it is one in which statesmen and clergymen were as deeply concerned as themselves; and that had it not been for the influence of others, they never would have adopted this sanguinary road to fame.—As the error has been common to people of all ranks, there is ample ground for mutual candor, mutual sympathy, and mutual efforts for a general reformation.

O that the time may be hastened, when christianity shall be exemplified in the lives of its professors. Then will be realized that blessedness, the prospect of which animated "a multitude of the heavenly host," while they sung "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; and good will towards men."

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### THE NOBLEST TREATY OF PEACE.\*

THE celebrated Montesquieu gives it as his opinion that "the noblest treaty of peace, ever mentioned in history, is that which Gelon," king of Syracuse "made with the Carthaginians. He insisted upon their abolishing the custom of *Sacrificing their children*. Glorious, says he, indeed! after having defeated 300,000 Carthaginians, he required a condition that was advantageous to themselves, or rather he stipulated in favor of human nature." *Spirit of Laws*, vol. i. p. 151.

Mr. Rollin quotes the article of the treaty—"that no

\* Not in the first edition.

more human sacrifices should be offered to Saturn." *Ancient History*, vol. i. p. 222.

This was indeed a noble treaty, which put an end to *one* inhuman custom among the Carthaginians. But how much more noble would it have been had Gelon "stipulated" for the abolition of his *own* custom of offering human sacrifices by war, and persuaded the Carthaginians to do the same. While he beheld with horror the "human sacrifices offered to Saturn," he was probably unmoved to see thousands after thousands sacrificed to his own ambition.

So Christians can see, as well as Gelon did, the inhumanity of those sacrifices which he abolished ; yet they can without remorse sacrifice themselves or their children in compliance with another custom, which is as inhuman, as unnecessary and as savage, as that of the Carthaginians. It must indeed be admitted that Christians have viewed their own *human sacrifices* as acceptable to God ; but so it was with the Carthaginians, and with reasons equally good.

Mr. Rollin quotes from Plutarch, a heathen moralist, some questions respecting the Carthaginian sacrifices, which deserve the consideration of fighting Christians :—

"Can this, says Plutarch, be called worshipping the gods ? Can we be said to entertain an honorable opinion of the gods, if we suppose that they are pleased with slaughter, thirsty of human blood, and capable of requiring or accepting such offerings ? Had it not been better for the Carthaginians to have had a Critias, a Diagoras, and such like *open atheists* for their lawgivers, than to have established so frantic and wicked a religion ? Could the Typhons and the Giants, the open enemies of the gods, had they gained a victory over them, have established more abominable sacrifices ?"

Will not Plutarch rise up in judgment against the sanguinary Christians of this age ?

END.







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